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Jill L. Ogline
University of Massachusetts Amherst

A MISSION TO A MAD COUNTY: BLACK DETERMINATION, WHITE RESISTANCE AND EDUCATIONAL CRISIS IN PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

A Dissertation Presented

by

JILL L. OGLINE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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History

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Approved as to style and content by:

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Max Page, Chair

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Françoise Hamlin, Member

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DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad for their unfailing support

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The friends and family who have cheerfully borne with this project for years are more than I can enumerate, but I credit them with providing much-needed doses of sanity in hectic moments. Several, however, deserve special recognition: Jeff and Krissy

Norcross for providing a home away from home in Philadelphia, and Jeff for serving as my "go to guy" on legal terminology; Bill Bolger and Jeff Evans for profoundly shaping my historical vision; and Valerie Miller for transcribing the Peeples interview. My most heartfelt thanks go to my best friend, longtime roommate and fellow history graduate student Jen Turner, who has quite literally lived with this project for four years. Despite her own heavy workload, Jen has always been there to share my excitement at new archival discoveries and help me think though new arguments. Finally, I want to thank my parents, Jerry and Barbara Ogline, for giving me a peaceful place to write whenever necessary, helping with transcriptions, and accepting my near-constant preoccupation with Prince Edward County. Though not particularly interested in history, they have always supported my dreams. For that, and for so many other things, I dedicate this project to them.

ABSTRACT

A MISSION TO A MAD COUNTY: BLACK DETERMINATION, WHITE RESISTANCE AND EDUCATIONAL CRISIS IN PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

MAY 2007

JILL L. OGLINE, B.A., TAYLOR UNIVERSITY

M.A., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Max Page

This dissertation explores the high water mark of southern resistance to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*: the five-year abolition of public education in Prince Edward County, Virginia. Through interrogating the "culture of civility" that guided this bureaucratic, legalistic strategy of defiance, it argues that both massive resistance and the unique trajectory of events in Prince Edward County are not the anomalies in Virginia history that state boosters suggest, but rather logically consistent outgrowths of a coherent political tradition known as "the Virginia Way." When blacks chose to step outside of the traditional channels of "managed race relations," white Virginians struck back in a manner consistent with their determination to maintain white supremacy without condoning a rise in vigilantism that might have threatened elites' control over the mechanisms of political power.

It highlights the important role played by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in bolstering community institutions, lobbying for federal intervention in the crisis, serving the educational and social needs of the out-of-school

children, and building the capacity of local community members to take on leadership roles in the struggle. It characterizes the Friends' work as providing the institutional framework for indigenous protest. By following the trajectory of AFSC involvement in the county, it weaves together the diverse narratives of massive resistance, community organizing and school desegregation into one multi-faceted struggle to control the terms of the future.

Ultimately, however, the study explores the long-range consequences of abandoning, starving, or compromising public education. In tracing the Prince Edward story up to the present, it reveals the flimsiness of the safeguards guaranteed to keep private education accessible, the difficulty of reconstructing a gutted public system, and the multi-generational psychological, social, and economic impact of educational deprivation. It demonstrates the centrality of equal educational opportunities to every phase of the local freedom struggle, challenging the assumption that the school desegregation phase of the civil rights movement passed into history after 1960 without sparking sustained community campaigns for change or significantly contributing to the development of local cultures of protest.

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INTRODUCTION

MOTON HIGH

On April 23, 1951, the all-black student body at Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, Virginia, the largest town in rural Prince Edward County, walked out of school. Demanding an expanded curriculum, an end to overcrowding, new facilities, and increased local commitment to black education, the students immediately contacted a man whose name repeatedly graced state newspapers as a champion of equal opportunity for blacks: special NAACP council Spottswood Robinson, who together with his partner Oliver Hill, spearheaded a massive litigation campaign against the inequalities of Jim Crow. Profoundly dedicated to their cause – once simultaneously pursuing actions in 75 different school districts – Robinson and Hill initially regarded the Moton action with a mixture of amazement and dismissal, yet agreed to make a brief trip to Farmville, fully intending to encourage the teenagers to return to school.[1]

By 1951, the Virginia NAACP team, in accordance with organization policy, had moved away from filing equalization suits. On the strength of the *Sweatt*[2] and *McLaurin*[3] decisions, NAACP lawyers now sought a case to argue solely on the grounds that segregation itself was inherently unequal and thus illegal, evidencing a strategic shift from concentration on equalization and graduate school suits to challenging the entire

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[1] Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of 'Brown v. Board of Education' and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 471.

[2] 339 U.S. 629 (1950).

[3] 339 U.S. 637 (1950).

premise of "separate but equal" in elementary and secondary education.[4] However, neither Hill nor Robinson, in Richard Kluger's words, wanted "to launch their first Virginia suit against segregated education itself in, of all places, Prince Edward County."[5] They hoped instead for a city, where blacks theoretically had greater organizational and financial resources and whites were slightly more open to change. Whites in Prince Edward were known for their intransigence, and local blacks had never been noted for exhibiting any particular militancy. Robinson and Hill considered black leadership in the county "long-suffering" and entirely lacking in the combativeness needed to sustain a lawsuit.

Though convinced that there was no less promising place in all Virginia to wage the fight for equal schools, Robinson and Hill kept their promise to the students and arrived in the county on the morning of April 25th. To their surprise, they found an unwavering level of determination among the student strikers and an enormous reservoir of support among the adult population. Deeply impressed by this surprising solidarity and militance, the lawyers agreed to file suit on behalf of the students. Formally titled *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*,[6] Virginia's first suit against

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[4] Kluger, p. 475-476; Mark Tushnet, *The NAACP's Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, p. 136.

[5] Kluger, ibid.

[6] 103 F.Supp. 337 (D.C.Va.1952).

segregated education later became one of the five cases immortalized as *Brown v. Board of Education*.[7]

School officials constructed R.R. Moton, the county's lone high school for African Americans, in 1939 as part of a statewide attempt to ward off legal challenges to segregation by improving black facilities and increasing access to state resources. But white resistance to spending money on black education ensured that this effort ran out of money long before it could come close to eliminating "separate and unequal." Built to accommodate 180 students, the school housed 477 by 1950. Instead of expanding the school or authorizing a bond issue to construct a new facility, the all-white school board erected three temporary wooden outbuildings. Covered with tarpaper, they resembled chicken coops and soon came to be known as the "tar paper shacks." Leaky and ill-heated, the buildings bred colds. Cracked from overheating, the stoves frequently spewed hot coals, and as Edwilda Isaac recalled, "whoever was closest had to grab it and throw it back in." Besides the shacks, overflow classes met in the auditorium and a parked school bus.[8]

Science teachers taught without microscopes, the industrial shop was virtually devoid of equipment, and bathroom facilities were inadequate. The building lacked a cafeteria or a school nurse, and the highest-paid teacher earned less than the lowest-paid instructor at the white high school. Though district officials added bus service to

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[7] 347 U.S. 483 (1954). The five cases were *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (KS); *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* (VA); *Briggs v. Elliott* (SC); *Gebhart v. Belton* (DE); and *Bolling v. Sharpe* (DC).

[8] R.C. Smith, *They Closed Their Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951-1964*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965. Reprint, Farmville, VA: Martha E. Forrester Council of Women, 1996), p. 15-19; Allen Freeman, "Farmville: A Burden of History," *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January/February 1996): 62-67.

outlying areas in the late 1940s, the small number of secondhand buses proved so inadequate that some riders regularly missed their first period class. Teachers doubled as bus drivers. Across town at Farmville High School – constructed the same year as Moton – white students enjoyed a wide variety of courses, locker rooms, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, an infirmary, and a well-equipped machine shop. Despite Moton's clear inadequacies, conditions in the district's other black school facilities were even worse. Fifteen buildings, valued at $330,000, served a student population of 2000. All but Moton High were of wood construction, heated by coal, wood, or kerosene stoves, and serviced by outdoor privies. Conversely, the seven white schools housing a population of 1400 were valued at $1,200,000. All were brick, with indoor toilet facilities, and steam or hot water heat.[9]

For nearly a decade preceding the strike, the Moton Parent Teachers Association (PTA), led by Rev. Leslie Francis Griffin, decried the inadequacy of the black high school. Throughout 1950 and 1951, members of the association appeared regularly before the school board to advocate for construction of a new building. The board responded apathetically, appointing a committee to locate a site for a new school yet failing to pursue the issue. Aware that the board was deliberately stalling, Griffin and John Lancaster, the county's black agricultural agent, took on the responsibility, tracking down an available spot south of town and negotiating a purchase price. Six months after the two black leaders brought the property to its attention, the school board finally

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[9] Kluger, p. 465; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 14-26; Edward H. Peeples, Jr., "Prince Edward County: The Story Without An End – A Report Prepared for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights," July 1963, p. 4-5, "Separate But Not Equal: Race, Education, and Prince Edward County, Virginia" Online Collection, Special Collections & Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (hereafter VCU). Hhttp://www.library.vcu.edu/jbc/speccoll/pec03a.html

informed the PTA in February 1951 that permission for purchase had been granted by the County Board of Supervisors. Board members encouraged Griffin and the other parents to discontinue their attendance at the monthly school board meetings, assuring them that they would be notified when the transaction was completed. By late April, the situation remained in abeyance.[10]

Into the gap created by this impasse stepped a group of students led by sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns, the niece of Vernon Johns, a civil rights figure in his own right and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s predecessor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. After weeks of preparation, they lured Principal M. Boyd Jones out of the building on April 23 and called a student assembly to announce a general strike. With one exception, student leaders voted to continue on their chosen course without first asking parental permission. Over the next few days, pupils circled the school grounds with picket signs – most made in the school's industrial shop, contacted the NAACP, and visited the county superintendent of schools in his office in the county courthouse. Years later, Johns, who passed away in 1991, recalled the sense of empowerment that characterized that day:

> We found in [Superintendent] Mr. Thomas J. McIlwaine a timid and evasive person who refused to be pinpointed by any question and who failed to look us directly in the face throughout the whole session...This gave us courage, however, and we bombarded him with zillions of questions about what his intentions were regarding our school situation. He first tried reasoning (his version), then he threatened us with expulsion, etc., but we refused to give in.[11]

According to strike committee member John Watson, the daring young people considered McIlwaine "a scared little old man whose world was falling apart around

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[10] Kluger, p. 468-477.

[11] Barbara Johns Powell, letter to R.C. Smith, 11 May 1960, qtd. in *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 41.

him." His threats that their actions could jeopardize their parents' employment merely heightened their contempt for his position, as did his blatant attempt to intimidate them by leading them into a courtroom and seating himself behind the judge's bench. Invited in 1952 to address an NAACP convention, Watson told the group that, "I suppose that when one is put off by his fellowman with more and more promises and no action, it is naturally expectable that he will get restless and will be driven to take matters into his own hands. That is what happened in our case." Stunned by the students' rebellion against the strictures of managed race relations, white residents gaped. In walking out of school, the R.R. Moton teenagers brought direct action to Farmville four years before the Montgomery bus boycott and ten years prior to the post-1960 explosion of civil disobedience, student unrest, and mass demonstrations.[12]

They stayed out of school for two weeks in an entirely student-instigated and student-led protest and independently contacted Virginia State Conference NAACP officials to request legal assistance. Taking matters into their own hands, these teenagers galvanized a community generally considered an unlikely location for a nationally significant civil rights struggle, due to the strength of white commitment to segregation and the absence of a strong black protest tradition. Participant Hazel Davis reflected in 2001 on the transformative power of the strike, "Until the strike, no one ever challenged.

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[12] John Watson, Jr., "The Students' Role in the Prince Edward County Case," 26 June 1952, NAACP Papers, Part 26: Selected Branch Files, 1940-1955, Series A: The South, Reel 26; John Watson, qtd. in Kathryn Orth, "A Walk to Remember," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 April 2001; Rob Chapman, "Standing Tall, Walking Out," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

You just go along. You don't have the thing within to challenge it; you don't have the means to challenge it."[13]

Yet their action was not entirely unprecedented. In 1946, Lumberton, North Carolina's NAACP Youth Council called a strike to protest inferior facilities. Students in Hearne, Texas staged a similar walkout a year later. In September 1947, a parent-instigated strike against double shifts at Washington, D.C.'s overcrowded Browne Junior High sent students to the picket lines. The Lumberton and Hearne controversies quickly abated when local officials improved the black schools. The adult-coordinated Browne strike was a much longer ordeal that ultimately succeeded in eliminating double shifts by the beginning of the next school year. Regardless, it is unlikely that Moton students used these actions as precedent. Prince Edward in the 1950's was an isolated region. With the exception of the county seat of Farmville, most of the county lacked telephone service as late as 1960. Although most households contained a radio and some a television, others were without electricity. Though the demographics of southern out-migration ensured that many residents had relatives in urban communities such as Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York City, many black teenagers had never traveled past the next county and a few not even outside the borders of Prince Edward.[14]

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[13]Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 26; Hazel Davis, qtd. in Donald P. Baker, "Shame of a Nation: The Lessons and Legacy of the Prince Edward School Closing," *Washington Post Magazine*, (March 4, 2001): 8-13, 21-26.

[14] James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 4; Peter Irons, *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision* (New York: Viking, 2002), p. 97; Irene Osborne, "Summary: School Situation in Prince Edward County, Virginia," June-September 1960, Prince Edward County Collection, 1960 Box, Folder 38128, Prince Edward County Collection, American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia (hereafter AFSC Archives).

The strikers originally went to the picket lines to demand equalized facilities and curriculum, not desegregated schools. But when they found themselves in need of legal representation and Oliver Hill and Spottswood Robinson proposed a desegregation suit, needs and goals intersected. Though sources have suggested that Barbara Johns' own personal goal may have been integration, the majority of the striking students had not initially intended to challenge the fundamental nature of the social structure around them. Yet the students and their parents proved receptive to the idea of a desegregation suit. Students fanned out across the county, going door to door asking black residents to sign petitions in support of the strike.[15]

The first mass meeting with NAACP representatives, held April 26th in the Moton High School auditorium, garnered a thousand attendees and surprisingly little opposition to the premise of suing to end segregation itself. When Executive Secretary of the Virginia State Conference of Branches W. Lester Banks asked those assembled if they would approve whatever action the NAACP deemed necessary to end segregation in the county's schools, the response was overwhelmingly in the assent. Only Fred Reid, one of the more conservative members of the community, rose to speak against the new approach, vowing support for an equalization campaign but expressing his disapproval of a desegregation suit in no uncertain terms. Reid spoke for an older model of race relations that had for years directed black-white interactions, but by 1951, his voice was solitary.[16]

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[15] Henry W. Powell, *Witness to Civil Rights History: The Essays and Autobiography of Henry W. Powell.* (Hastings, NY: Patrick Cooney, 2000), p. 104.

[16] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 55-56.

After a few days canvassing the county, Griffin concluded that there were few skeptics who could not be brought on board through one more rousing meeting. On May 3, Hill and Robinson petitioned the school board to end segregation in the county school system. A second mass meeting that evening at Griffin's First Baptist Church took the form of a rally, a public declaration that the black community stood united in its embrace of the tactics and the goals of the NAACP, considered by white residents an extremely radical, dangerous organization. Rising before his neighbors, Rev. Griffin, who would stand at the helm of the black struggle in the county for the next twenty years, argued that "anyone who would not back these children after they stepped out on a limb is not a man...anyone who won't fight against racial prejudice is not a man."[17] The teenagers' actions, the sense of solidarity born at the mass meetings, and the challenge of these words propelled the community down the road to national notoriety, educational tragedy, and a unique place in history.

By summer's end, after firing Boyd Jones and failing to renew the contract of a black teacher whose daughter had been a leader in the strike, county authorities unearthed the once-unavailable funds needed to build a new Moton High School. Efforts that had been languishing for years suddenly moved ahead at full steam, but a cross-burning on school property and a series of ugly threats against Barbara Johns prompted the teenager's family to send her to Montgomery, AL to finish her senior year of high school in the home of her famous uncle. The new school building, completed in 1953, had all the facilities deemed important in a modern high school, including an auditorium, a gymnasium, and a cafeteria. But the quality of education in this state-of-the-art building

[17] Ibid, p. 59.

still did not equal that offered whites at Farmville High School. Textbooks were in short supply. The new library had few volumes on its shelves. Biology classes shared a single microscope. Audiovisual equipment was virtually nonexistent, as were teaching tools such as charts, maps, and globes. A teacher from this period remembered that district authorities treated the hiring of personnel for the black schools with the utmost casualness, subjecting applicants to only the most superficial of examinations. The other fourteen school buildings (one in use in 1951 was abandoned in 1953) used by black students remained unimproved. All remained in use in their separate and unequal capacity up to the 1959 decision to close the public schools.[18]

Nonetheless, white leadership in the county pointed to the new building as testimony of its "good intentions" toward African Americans, as a pledge of friendship and an indication of sincere desire to support black advancement. Given what they believed to be a show of largesse on their part, many were genuinely puzzled when blacks refused to demonstrate proper gratitude by dropping the lawsuit. Such a refusal violated the established norms of controlled race relations. As J. Douglas Smith points out in *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia*, Virginia paternalists "promised to provide a modicum of basic services and even encouraged a certain amount of black educational and economic uplift. In return, white

[18] Powell. p. 108, 116; R.C. Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 67-68, 75; Neil V. Sullivan, *Bound for Freedom: An Educator's Adventures in Prince Edward County, Virginia,* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1965), p. 53; Peeples, "Prince Edward County," p. 6, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU.

elites demanded complete deference and expected blacks to seek redress of their grievances only through channels deemed appropriate by whites."[19]

By turning to the NAACP and challenging their neighbors in court, black Prince Edwarders rejected white timetables, demonstrating their determination to henceforth chart their own destiny. Angry whites nursed their resentment for seven years. In 1954, the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* broadcast Prince Edward's school situation to a global audience, but the district court issued no direct desegregation orders until May 1959. When the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals finally handed down the long-expected command to desegregate by September, Prince Edward's Board of Supervisors responded by terminating all funding for the public schools. Understandably shell-shocked, several of the 1951 strike leaders began to question the wisdom of their decision to take a stand. Leslie Francis Griffin, Jr. noted in 2004 that his father long worried that Barbara Johns, John Watson, and John Stokes considered themselves responsible for bringing trouble upon the Prince Edward black community. "My father used to say to me, as you become a man, remind them and everyone else that they didn't start this," Griffin commented. "This was started because the South had laws which codified what black people could be."[20]

From 1959 to 1964, the chains on the school doors bore testimony to southern white intransigence. The struggle in Prince Edward became a barometer for both the depth of black commitment to desegregated education and the intensity of southern white

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[19] J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 4.

[20] Rob Chapman, "Standing Tall, Walking Out," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

resistance to *Brown*. Each side dug in its heels, set up its own institutions and looked to the federal courts for validation of its position. Each hung its hopes upon a series of court rulings that proved to be slow in coming. Outside the county, parties interested in the issues at stake observed carefully. Most Americans, however, had other concerns. A young black resident poised to enter seventh grade when the schools closed, who later went on to a distinguished career in the U.S. Foreign Service, pointed out in hindsight that:

> When the schools closed in September 1959, young and old, black and white alike were reminded that Communism was the greatest evil and threat to the United States. America was more concerned about the threat of Russian and its satellite Cuba off the coast of Florida that what was happening in America to black folks and to those 1700 youngsters in Prince Edward County, Virginia.[21]

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Prince Edward County attained infamy as the only community in the nation to close all its public schools for five years rather than comply with a court order to desegregate. Historians often argue that the school desegregation campaign belongs to an earlier, more elite, less participatory phase of the civil rights movement centered around the judicial system.[22] Yet in Prince Edward, the separate and unequal conditions at the black high school provided the fire that refined the black community into a political

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[21] Carlton M. Terry, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[22] See Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education*; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955. Reprint, Commemorative Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984); and Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981).

force, paving the way for the 1951 student walkout, the decision of the adult community to support the students, the involvement of the NAACP, and the filing of *Davis v. County School Board.*

The closing of the public schools in 1959 furthered the politicization that began in Moton High School's "tar paper shacks," ushering in another decade of litigation. But the 1960's also moved the battle beyond the courts. The formation of the Prince Edward County Christian Association as an active grassroots force, and the emergence of its president, the Rev. Leslie Francis Griffin, as one of Virginia's leading civil rights figures; the organizational campaigns of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); the development of an interracial discussion group; mass demonstrations and arrests; an economic boycott of Farmville merchants; and a voter registration drive all sprang from the taproot of the "schools issue." In Prince Edward, the campaign for school desegregation evidenced in NAACP-supported litigation and the direct action campaign embodied in sit-ins, demonstrations and arrests were one and the same. Sometimes working together, often carving out separate niches, and occasionally at cross purposes, local residents, NAACP lawyers, and human relations workers fashioned a broad movement for civil rights around the skeleton of litigation.

Positioned as it was at the juncture of white "massive resistance" to desegregation and African American commitment to achieving civil rights and equal opportunity, the struggle over the schools took on enormous tactical, symbolic and practical significance. NAACP attorneys immediately challenged the county's assertion that local governments are not constitutionally obligated to provide a system of free public education to their constituents, returning the issue to the courts under a new suit, *Griffin v. Prince Edward*

County.[23] County residents, federal officials and civil rights organizations alike recognized that Prince Edward's particular avenue of obstructionism made it the ultimate test case for a whole region of belligerent school boards and irate segregationists.

Though accorded relatively little notice by historians, the events in Prince Edward are a vital chapter in civil rights history, offering new insights into the varieties of white resistance and the influence of regional political culture upon local movements. While massive resistance does have credence as a coherent concept, the gradations and shadings that comprise it have been too rarely analyzed. Cultures of resistance were shaped by regional, urban/rural, political, economic, and social variations. Individuals also embraced a wide variety of personal opinions and private rationales for public actions. Opinions and worldviews among non egalitarian-minded whites ran the gamut from ultra-segregationist to moderately progressive. Moving beyond generalizations about white attitudes and the easy model of black-white polarization opens up the possibility of illuminating the complex cycles of dissent and repression that actually characterized race relations in the county.

The Prince Edward crisis was a particularly "Virginian" struggle. Both Jim Crow and the struggle against segregation were generally less physically violent in Virginia than elsewhere in the South. A conservative, elite political culture, a fixation upon law and order and an accompanying distrust of popular movements or mass participation in politics mitigated against high levels of corporeal violence. A severely circumscribed electorate, a dedication to "managed" race relations and a diversified economy also significantly contributed. Yet at the same time, Virginians maintained a wholehearted

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[23] 377 U.S. 218 (1964).

commitment to defending white supremacy. The proving ground for massive resistance, Virginia pioneered strategies of legislative and legal obstructionism that soon became standard across the South, such as legal harassment of the NAACP and laws mandating the withdrawal of state funds from any school that attempted to obey the Court's ruling. Commentators have off-handedly attributed the low level of physical violence in the Prince Edward struggle to a local culture of "civility," but have failed to interrogate that culture or to question the intersection of civility and legislative/legal resistance. As William Chafe makes clear in *Civilities and Civil Rights*, southern communities possessed different ways of saying "never."[24]

Virginia's gentlemanly intransigence, relatively calm schoolyards, and disapproval of Ku Klux Klan techniques rested upon a foundation of anti-black prejudice and a firm commitment to using the institutions of civil society to stamp out protest and protect white privilege. In Prince Edward, blacks stepped outside the channels for reform considered appropriate by leading whites, breaking the mold of "managed" race relations. Marshalling external allies, demanding immediate action, and refusing to defer to the timetable of white elites, they challenged this culture of "civility" that privileged calm over justice or change. White response was immediate, bureaucratic, legalistic, and calculated to serve the interests of economic elites. Supposedly dispassionate courts and bodies of elected officials, rather than vigilantes or mobs, set the course of events. The

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[24] William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 170. Also see J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and Benjamin Muse, *Virginia's Massive Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

pleas of economically disadvantaged or even middle class whites who could not afford private education for their children were disregarded at little political cost. An iron hand sheathed in a velvet glove spurred along white resistance in Prince Edward. Cruelty in Virginia took a different form than in the Deep South, but was no less cruel for all its gentility.

The county's highly unique trajectory of events reveals the connections between local experience, national litigation campaigns, regional responses to school desegregation, and federal-level negotiations over civil rights reform. Though school closings became endemic across the South as the forces of massive resistance battled to circumvent *Brown v. Board of Education*, the closings in Prince Edward were the nation's longest and most comprehensive. Most locales closed only the buildings immediately targeted by specific desegregation orders. Furthermore, few closings were allowed to continue beyond the span of a single academic year. Yet in Prince Edward, authorities took the most drastic action imaginable. They shut down public education entirely and "held the line" for five years, until ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court to resume financial appropriations to the schools.

The Prince Edward case is also unique in that the battle over public education, unlike the majority of school desegregation suits, exerted a direct impact upon virtually every resident of the county, black or white. Every child in Prince Edward lost the right to a taxpayer-supported education. All parents found themselves forced to make alternative arrangements for their children. Some black parents possessed the resources to send their children out of the county, but the majority poured their time and effort into creating a homegrown educational curriculum. While the majority of white students did

transition into the new private school system without losing any classroom time, some parents did not make an effort to register their children. Others fell behind in their tuition payments and refused to become charity cases, choosing instead to withdraw their children from school. Many struggled to raise the necessary money, taking on extra jobs and often going without basic necessities. Others experienced harassment from creditors and school personnel, causing them to lose status in the community.

Black teachers lost their jobs and subsequently either relocated their families or commuted to jobs in surrounding counties. The pressure of public opinion compelled most white educators into the private school system. White students at the state teachers' college, Longwood College, located in the county, struggled to meet the classroom requirements for their degrees. Business owners and college administrators fretted over attracting industry, employees, and prospective faculty members to a county that was so unfriendly to families.

Prince Edward and the Existing Historiography

The current historiography has provided some abiding pictures of the repercussions that fell upon black plaintiffs in school desegregation lawsuits, yet images of select individuals suffering midnight riders, economic persecution, and intimidation by employers, useful as they are for the majority of southern communities undergoing desegregation, do not accurately represent the trajectory of events in Prince Edward. It follows that the comprehensive, intensely personal nature of this crisis reveals the analytical flaws inherent in framing civil rights narratives as mutually exclusive accounts of black activism and white resistance. Individual choices are not inveterately

predetermined by race and true understanding of how movements operate is only found in examining the collision points between activism and resistance. The naked extremity of the situation in Prince Edward – and the subsequent involvement of most county residents in the crisis – makes the process of choice and collision easier to observe than in other locales where smaller numbers of individuals were directly affected by local civil rights struggles.

R.C. Smith, a journalist who covered the county throughout the school-closing period, has recently argued that if "there was such a thing as a cradle of the civil rights movement it first rocked here, in Prince Edward County." Smith's interpretation of the significance of the crisis echoes an earlier understanding. Contemporaries from Roy Wilkins to Robert F. Kennedy to local black leader Roger Madison accorded great significance to the events in Prince Edward. Professional historians have, by and large, seen things differently. They have alluded to the county in texts on massive resistance or the *Brown* decision, but not seen it as important enough to secure a place in overviews, textbooks, or books likely to be read by a general audience.[25]

Although the last fifteen years have produced several dissertations and masters theses on the events in the county, none have been published. The four published book-length works on the closings are journalistic, fictional and/or narrative in nature.[26] Even

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[25] Kathryn Orth, "'59 Schools Closing Highlighted: H-SC is Challenged to Examine Its Role," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 October 1999.

histories of the *Brown* decision, which do tell the story, provide much more attention to the first Prince Edward case, *Davis v. County School Board,* than the second, *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*.[27] This may be due to the fact that *Davis* is generally considered a triumph. The events surrounding it also have a clear-cut beginning and end. The 1951 strike is a gripping and hopeful story of youth agitating for change, long before the use of such tactics was in the mainstream, and achieving real results in the form of a new black high school. Like its sister cases in Delaware, Kansas, South Carolina and Washington, D.C., *Davis*, under the umbrella of *Brown*, opened the door to equality. But *Griffin*, like *Cooper v. Aaron*, insisted that *Brown* be more than merely words on paper.[28] It closed what could have been a major avenue for avoiding compliance with the decision. It also reaffirmed the relationship between public education and democracy and ordered that over 2000 wronged children be returned to school.

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[26] R.C. Smith's detailed *They Closed Their Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1951-1964*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965. Reprint, Farmville, VA: Martha E. Forrester Council of Women, 1996) is a journalist's account. Neil V. Sullivan's *Bound for Freedom: An Educator's Adventures in Prince Edward County, Virginia,* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1965) is a highly subjective autobiographical look at the Prince Edward Free School Association, which operated an open school in county in 1963-1964. Both were written the year after the *Griffin* decision and thus provide little perspective on long-term impact. Gerald and Vonita Foster's *Silent Trumpets of Justice: Integration's Failure in Prince Edward County* (Hampton, VA: U.B. & U.S. Communication Systems, 1993) is largely a personal retrospective that, told exclusively from the black perspective, often idealizes the pre-*Brown* segregated school. The most recent book to hit the shelves is Dennis McFarland's novel *Prince Edward* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2004), a work of fiction told through the eyes of a young white boy and his black friend.

[27] 103 F.Supp. 337 (D.C.Va.1952); 377 U.S. 218 (1964).

[28] 358 U.S. 1 (1958). In *Cooper v. Aaron*, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could not deny or delay integration due to threats of physical violence.

Yet the case and the local struggle that birthed it are often ignored, particularly in survey works, which tend to focus on sustained campaigns like Montgomery, Selma, or Little Rock that generated national leaders, altered national attitudes or patterns, or demonstrated black ability to remain on the offensive. Thus, Harvard Sitkoff includes one sentence on Prince Edward in his classic *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980.* Taylor Branch's epic *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* contains three pages of material on the strike and three paragraphs on the closings, and Aldon Morris's *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* passes on the topic altogether. Frequently used surveys of the era, such as Robert Weisbrot's *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement*, Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin's *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960's*, Terry Anderson's *The Sixties*, and David Halberstam's *The Fifties* all make no mention of Prince Edward County.[29]

Historians of the *Brown* decision and the legal struggle for racial justice are much more likely to pay attention to the events in Southside Virginia. Though James Patterson covers *Griffin* in two sentences in *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy*, Richard Kluger deals extensively with the *Davis* case and includes two sentences on the closings in his afterward in *Simple Justice.* Peter Irons and Raymond Wolters examine the story in more detail – Irons through a chapter on *Davis* and seven pages on *Griffin* in *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown*

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[29] See Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Touchstone, 1988); Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Plume, 1990); Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Terry Anderson, *The Sixties* (New York: Longman, 1999); and David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993).

Decision and Wolters in a substantial chapter on Prince Edward in *The Burden of Brown: Thirty Years of School Desegregation.* The two cases appear briefly in Loren Miller's *The Petitioners: The Story of the Supreme Court of the United States and the Negro*, Mark Tushnet's, *Making Civil Rights Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 196-1961* and Michael Klarman's *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*.[30]

Another reason the events in Prince Edward may receive so little coverage is because they do not fit the established civil rights chronology. It is often assumed that by 1964, the school desegregation phase of the movement passed into history and attention shifted to voting rights and desegregation of public accommodations. The year's most lasting civil rights images are Freedom Summer and the Civil Rights Act, not ongoing battles over school desegregation. The Prince Edward story poses a challenge to this chronology, demonstrating the ongoing interplay between school desegregation campaigns and the development of local cultures of protest.

But perhaps the most important factor is the seeming fruitlessness of the struggle. When the fight began in 1951, most black Prince Edwarders hoped for two things for the younger generation: access to greater educational opportunities and the prospect of a life unconstrained by the strictures, humiliations, and inequalities of Jim Crow. White

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[30] See Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Kluger, *Simple Justice* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Irons, *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision* (New York: Viking, 2002); Wolters, *The Burden of Brown: Thirty Years of School Desegregation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Miller, *The Petitioners: The Story of the Supreme Court of the United States and the Negro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966); Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 196-1961* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

response to the pursuit of the second goal destroyed the first. After fifteen years in court and five years without schools, black plaintiffs succeeded only in reopening an under-funded public school system segregated by choice rather than state law. Not until the 1970's did budgetary allocations rise to adequate levels. significant numbers of white students return to the public schools, and district administrators devote substantial effort to recruiting and maintaining a competent, meaningfully integrated staff. Thousands of children, known to observers as "the crippled generation," suffered the aftereffects of educational dislocation well into adulthood. Many, black and white alike, are still daily handicapped by functional illiteracy, narrow job opportunities, psychological trauma, and a lack of the educational prerequisites necessary for vocational advancement or continuing education programs.

Despite the determination, actions, and suffering of the black community, activists did not attain either of the two goals closest to their hearts in any immediate fashion. Yet this does not make the struggle worthless, nor does it imply that the Prince Edward freedom fighters accomplished nothing of value. The concept of "successful failures," organizing attempts that do not succeed in achieving their concrete, immediate goals, but nonetheless lead to dramatic transformations in political education, consciousness, interests and behavior, is relevant here. The Prince Edward campaign bears many of the marks of a successful failure, most notably the fact that it served as a vehicle for the importation of a new political consciousness. The black community's inability to reopen the schools without a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court was obviously a failure. Yet the organizing campaign that produced a voter registration drive, mass demonstrations, youth mobilizations, new community organizations, and a spirit of

militance that would continue to demand quality in the reopened public schools was an undeniable success.

As Eve Weinbaum says in *To Move A Mountain*:

> Failures – rather than resulting in humiliation and depression – can create the context for social change and pivotal political movements…They demonstrate to marginalized groups that resistance is possible, even against powerful forces of oppression. Second, they create structures and networks of people that are essential to any mobilization attempt – for even if they decline, they always have the potential to be rebuilt. Third, struggle itself trains people in the skills of political action and democratic citizenship. Fourth, small victories along the way teach marginalized communities the strength and power of their collective action, and thus make them more likely to stand up for their goals in the future. And finally, failures in particular teach communities the strength and power of their opposition –essential knowledge for any political effort.[31]

The American Friends Service Committee Enters the Story

The unusual conditions in Prince Edward County made this particular community struggle a national issue, prompting the Southern Interagency Conference, an umbrella organization of progressive groups operating in the South, to appoint a member agency to take the lead in providing day-to-day services to county residents.[32] The group selected the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the organized outreach arm of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Established in 1917 to provide alternative service opportunities for conscientious objectors, the AFSC boasted a well-respected

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[31] Eve S. Weinbaum, *To Move a Mountain: Fighting the Global Economy in Appalachia,* (New York: The New Press, 2004), p. 267.

[32] The Southern Interagency Conference consisted of the National Association of Colored People (NAACP); the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA); the Southern Regional Council (SRC); the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); the Unitarian Service Committee; the United Auto Workers (UAW); the American Jewish Congress; the National Council of Churches (NCC); the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU); Fisk University; the Jewish Labor Committee; and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

identity as a relief agency and a crusader for peace and social justice. Moving in in 1960 with a vow to help work toward a solution "which will support the American belief in the importance of public schools in a democracy, uphold the role of the judiciary as an interpreter of the Constitution, and affirm Christian principles underlying racial justice," the AFSC maintained a Community Relations Project in the county until 1965.[33]

Throughout the 1920's, organization work concentrated upon relief efforts in Germany and Russia, particularly feeding children and establishing medical programs. The economic and social problems of the Great Depression refined the organization's identity, throwing the AFSC into campaigns for fair housing and family planning in Appalachia and efforts to assist those dispossessed by the Spanish Civil War. The 1940's brought both partnership with the federal government in administering the Civilian Public Service Program, established to work with conscientious objectors, and sharp criticism of that same government through an assistance program for incarcerated Japanese Americans. In the wake of the 1943 Detroit race riot, the AFSC launched a Race Relations Program. As World War II came to an end, it plunged into refugee work in Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Italy and France.[34]

Organizers developed new programs in the 1950's, such as "Employment on Merit," which encouraged businesses to hire minorities in "non-traditional" positions; a vibrant Peace Education and anti-nuclear program; a community development effort in

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[33] "Fact Sheet: Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia," August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38121, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[34] American Friends Service Committee Archives, "A Brief Description of Selected Record Groups, 1917-1980," Hhttp://www.afsc.org/archlong.htmH; Susan Lynn, *Progressive Women in Conservative Times: Racial Justice, Peace, and Feminism, 1945 to the 1960s*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 71.

Barpali, India; a School Desegregation Program in North Carolina; and several local community relations projects (Washington, D.C., Little Rock, Mississippi, and Louisiana) focused on peaceful integration of the public schools. In the words of historian Susan Lynn, the AFSC was a "small but cohesive and highly effective organization." Besides the central office in Philadelphia, it fielded twelve regional offices and in 1955 employed 350 staff members nationwide. An additional 1000 people intimately participated in the organization through the advisory committees that supervised each program. Like its parent organization, the Society of Friends, the AFSC was predominately white, but hired increasing numbers of minorities throughout the 1940's, 50's and 60's, particularly for staff positions in the Community Relations Division.[35]

Entering Prince Edward fresh from reconciliation work in Little Rock, Community Relations Division staff members understood the dynamics of tense racial situations. Though not all considered themselves Friends, they shared a deep devotion to nonviolence, a desire to "speak truth to power," and a commitment to the Quaker conviction that a bit of the divine resides in every human being. AFSC programs consequently focused upon finding and refining the divine spark in bigoted segregationists, cowed blacks, and everyone in between. This under-girding philosophy, "based on respect for individual personality and belief in the power of love to overcome prejudice and suspicion," was not sentimental or rose-colored. On the contrary, it required those who espoused it "to be the vehicles that disrupt the lives of others." The

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[35] "A Brief Description of Selected Record Groups, 1917-1980;" AFSC Timeline of Public Education Work, Hhttp://www.afsc.org/about/public-ed-timeline.htmH; Lynn, p. 71.

Quaker approach forbade dehumanization of its opponents, but also demanded that their errors be challenged and their comfort disrupted.[36]

Hired by the AFSC Foreign Service Program in 1946, Jean Fairfax went on to spend nineteen years with the Friends, including six years as director of College Programs in New England and eight as Director of Southern Civil Rights Programs. In 2005, she summed up the philosophy that guided her work with the organization in the words:

> I believe that we all have to be the vehicles that disrupt the lives of others. That's why I believe in litigation, sometimes demonstrations, the wonderful Quaker phrase "speaking truth to power." It's not just speaking the language of truth, but demonstrating that there are people who can trouble the waters...It's very important to be involved in social change efforts which disturb the status quo and make life very uncomfortable for the people who are creating misery for others.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, by college educated parents, Fairfax grew up in an integrated community, attended a predominantly Jewish high school, and forged many close friendships with white classmates.[37]

She graduated from the University of Michigan in 1941, spent two years as the Dean of Women at Kentucky State College, and earned a M.A. at New York City's Union Theological Seminary in 1944. During her time at Union, she studied with two of the era's most influential theologians, the legendary Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, whom she considered "by far the greatest teacher I ever had." Returning to college work,

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[36] Jean Fairfax, Southern Programs Director, AFSC, retired, interview by author, 7-8 January 2005, Phoenix, AZ, transcript, p. 1-2, Author's Personal Files; "Fact Sheet: Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia," August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38121, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[37] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 2, 23; Jean Fairfax Vita/Biography, 2005, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Lynn, p. 77.

she served as Dean of Women at Tuskegee Institute until 1946, at which time her passion for applying the principles of Christian pacifism to social problems attracted her to the AFSC, which she considered the period's leading force in "bringing a religious nonviolent approach to bear on social issues."[38]

Originally assigned to a position with the German relief team, Fairfax's first months with the organization sparked a bitter debate between the British army and German, British and American Friends over how to handle the objections raised by some German Quakers to the presence of a black relief worker. AFSC Executive Secretary Clarence Pickett and Race Relations Program Secretary G. James Fleming both took strong stands, insisting that AFSC would not acquiesce in a policy of racial discrimination and "take over Hitler's Aryan program." Other American Quakers, however, made "patronizing and insensitive" remarks that deeply angered their new staff member. Ultimately, the Executive Committee of the Foreign Service Section agreed to accept the British decision to send an all-white staff, but requested a policy change for all future assignments.[39]

Fairfax, for her part, agreed to go to Austria instead, where her fluent German made her an invaluable part of the reconstruction program. After two years organizing work camps and assisting with a Neighborhood Center project that provided recreational, educational and social programs for members of the local community, she returned to the United States even more deeply convinced that the devastation of war accomplished nothing of lasting value. Returning again to student work, she took over a college

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[38] Jean Fairfax Vita/Biography, 2005, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Lynn, p. 77.

[39] Lynn, p. 77.

secretary position in the New England region, turning her attention toward nurturing American college students' awareness of the rest of the world. From 1949 to 1955, she organized work projects, work camps, international institutes and student exchanges. In 1956, desiring "to find out what was going on in Africa," Fairfax embarked on a year-long tour of African continent, during which she visited seventeen countries.[40]

As the AFSC's merit employment, fair housing and school desegregation programs mushroomed in the 1950's, the organization turned to Fairfax to assume the supervisory role of Director of Southern Civil Rights Programs, which she held until 1965. Upon leaving the AFSC, she continued her civil rights work with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, serving as Director of the Division of Legal Information and Community Services from 1965 to 1985. After leaving the Legal Defense Fund, she turned her attention toward stimulating black philanthropy, accepting a position with the Association of Black Foundation Executives. Even in retirement, her passion for social and racial justice carried her into extensive foundation and commission work.[41]

Over a span of years, she served as Secretary of the Arizona Community Foundation, Chair of the Black Women's Community Development Foundation, and as a Trustee of the Southern Education Foundation, the Ruth Mott Fund, and the Hazen Foundation. As a member of the Southern Education Foundation's Panel on Educational Opportunity and Postsecondary Desegregation, the American Hospital Association's Committee on Health Care for the Disadvantaged, and the World Council of Churches

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[40] Jean Fairfax Vita/Biography, 2005, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Lynn, p. 77-78, 109-110; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 1.

[41] Jean Fairfax Vita/Biography, 2005, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

Central Committee and Programme to Combat Racism, she continued to advance the causes that defined her professional career. In 1992, Tougaloo College recognized her labors to secure equality before the law with an honorary Doctorate of Laws.[42]

The work Fairfax oversaw in Prince Edward centered around three fundamental goals: 1) serving the educational and social needs of the over 2000 (and increasing yearly) black children displaced from school by cooperating with grassroots efforts organized by the black community; 2) pressing the federal government for intervention; and 3) building interracial understanding through emboldening moderates and opening channels of communication between the white and black communities. This multi-faceted focus made the program highly unique. As she explained, "We were not just trying to save a few students by moving them out of the state or just working in Washington or working in the county. It was multi-faceted and it was an evolving program, but each part of the program was related to the others." Most of the other outside groups who volunteered in Prince Edward County during the crisis years came for only short periods of time, bringing with them sincere but brief agendas. AFSC staff members came for the long haul. They lived in the community and pursued day to day contact with large numbers of local residents.[43]

Directing attention to the avenues through which staff members pursued these goals will highlight the comprehensive nature of the crisis, the varieties of white resistance and the influence of regional political cultures upon local movements. This

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[42] Ibid; Dr. Edward H. Peeples, Jr., Professor Emeritus, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia race relations activist and AFSC consultant, interview by author, 29 June 2006, Richmond, VA, transcript, p. 1, Author's Personal Files.

[43] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 8.

attention to the AFSC opens up other issues, including the process of building the "capacity" of local leaders (both black and white) to effect change and ensure local control of the movement and the efficacy of attempts to induce federal intervention. This study also will analyze the impact of creative crisis-response programs such as the Emergency Placement Project[44] and Citizens for Public Education (CPE).[45]

In the eyes of Spottswood Robinson, who handled the Prince Edward case from 1951 to his departure for Howard University Law School in 1960, local black passion for the suit dwindled between the strike and the events of 1959. Noting that lawyers were forced to delay filing a new complaint in the wake of the closings until a plaintiff could be found, he commented that if people had better understood what was happening in the courts throughout this eight year period, this partial return to quiescence might have been avoided. In Robinson's opinion, as lawyers lack the time to continuously and comprehensively interpret legal proceedings to the masses, the responsibility rightly devolves upon the NAACP, under the umbrella of its "educational" function. Fairfax, who later went on to spend twenty years with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, noted candidly that this responsibility is often shirked, and that the Prince Edward black population often resented the fact that it saw so little of NAACP national leaders, such as Roy Wilkins, Herbert Hill, and John Morsell. Without pretending a legal expertise which they did not possess, AFSC staff members attempted to fill this gap: interpreting national

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[44] The Emergency Placement Project placed 67 black students with carefully-selected host families in northern and Midwestern communities. While participating in the program, students attended school, experienced integration firsthand, and were exposed to cultural opportunities rare in southern Virginia.

[45] Founded by the AFSC, Citizens for Public Education (CPE) was a county-wide interracial coalition that championed public education and encouraged white parents to shun the segregation academy.

developments, boosting morale, and placing the local issue in the context of the broader freedom movement.[46]

The decision to go into Prince Edward County played a significant role in charting the AFSC's course for the next two decades. Throughout the 1960's and 70`s, the organization devoted the bulk of its resources to enforcing civil rights law; improving public education; and achieving real desegregation in America's schools. Though it has never received much historical notice, the American Friends Service Committee played an important role in advancing the civil rights revolution. Through community relations projects, public education campaigns, fundraising drives, skillful lobbying efforts, deliberate and concerted investment in local leadership, and technical assistance to communities and individuals in need, AFSC staff members and volunteers plugged gaps and raised public awareness of the issues at stake. When the AFSC came to Prince Edward, a highly distinctive international organization met a local community that had its own unique story. The meeting of these two entities created a struggle between a vision of an equal, just, open, educated society versus a commitment to cheap labor and an inflexible hierarchy of race and class.

AFSC's distinctive strategy of "capacity building" rendered the organization uniquely able to negotiate the "turf wars" between various civil rights organizations, further magnifying the significance of its role in the county. The Friends' penchant for seeking out sustained contact with everyone from activist members of the Prince Edward

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[46] Jean Fairfax to Barbara Moffett, Secretary, Community Relations Division, 20 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38216, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Jean Fairfax to John Morsell, Assistant to the Executive Secretary, 12 February 1960, NAACP Papers, Part 24: Special Subjects, 1956-1965, Series B: Foreign Affairs – Leagues & Organizations, Reel 27.

County Christian Association, local segregationists, and out-of-school teenagers to officials in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare and NAACP National Office staff lends their activities added significance. Following their trajectory through the crisis highlights "cause and effect" relationships, brings more voices into the narrative – hopefully enriching its depth and complexity – and helps to situate the Prince Edward tragedy at the intersection of studies of massive resistance, community organizing and school desegregation.

The "AFSC style" was remarkably similar to SNCC's strategy of empowering local leaders and encouraging community organization rather than community mobilization.[47] In this vein, AFSC's investment in the development of emerging leaders, both adults and youth, proved pivotal to propelling politicization and nurturing the new spirit of resistance within the black community. The lack of attention to the AFSC in the small but growing body of research on Prince Edward County has also obscured the interracial dynamics of the indigenous public school advocacy groups developed in the county. It may ultimately lead researchers to ask the wrong question: why no moderate voices emerged in Prince Edward rather than why those that did proved unable to eventually garner majority support. This is a significant distinction, for uncritically accepting contemporary county officials' assertion of absolute white unity allows the power structure's narrative of events to remain unchallenged.

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[47] For more on this distinction, see R. Moses, M. Kamii, and J. Howard, "The Algebra Project: Organizing in the Spirit of Ella," *Harvard Educational Review* 59 (November 1989): 423-443 and Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); p. 3.

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White residents knew all about the inequalities in Prince Edward's school system. They recognized the overcrowded and inadequate conditions, the second-hand textbooks, and the almost nonexistent supplies and resources. Unperturbed, they assumed that the resources allocated provided a sufficient education for members of what they considered an "inferior" population. A stratified and hierarchical society that offered only severely constrained employment opportunities to black adults did not wrack itself with guilt over inequalities between schools. It never occurred to most whites that black students needed, deserved, or possessed a right to the same resources as their own children. Henry Powell, who worked in the county's black schools in the 1950's, reflected that *Brown* upset the status quo on multiple fronts:

> Now that the federal government had decreed integration, their [white] children would have to go to school with the products of a vastly inferior educational system. Would not an infusion of large numbers of poorly prepared black children have brought down for all children the levels of scholastic achievement? Now their chickens were coming home to roost and with a vengeance! Did they ever blame themselves for the situation in which they found themselves? Did they ever face up to the realization that if they had striven as diligently to guarantee equality as they had to preserve separation, integration could have been deferred indefinitely?[48]

But preserving segregation, rather than guaranteeing equality or ensuring children the kind of education that provides a way up in the world, constituted the primary concern of those who held the reins of power in Prince Edward County. The subsequent battle to overturn these priorities proved long and arduous.

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[48] Powell, p. 122.

CHAPTER 1

NOT AN ABERRATION: MASSIVE RESISTANCE AS AN ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT IN VIRGINIA POLITICAL HISTORY, 1924-59

Reflecting on the racial code that defined his Virginia childhood, Rev. Leslie Francis Griffin, Prince Edward County's "fighting preacher," reminisced that "things were fine so long as we stayed in our place." Virginia's interpretation of Jim Crow was stifling to black aspirations but nonetheless distinct from the racial code that governed life in the Deep South. In the words of historian J. Douglas Smith, "Virginians embraced a concept of managed race relations that emphasized a particularly genteel brand of paternalism." The Old Dominion, after all, had been the aristocratic capitol of the Old South. White elites, who controlled the reins of power in this extremely oligarchic state, wholeheartedly supported segregation and disfranchisement but shunned vigilante violence and naked racial domination as uncouth and threatening to social stability. As esteemed political scientist V.O. Key wrote in 1949, "Politics in Virginia is reserved for those who can qualify as gentlemen. Rabble-rousing and Negro baiting capacities, which in Georgia or Mississippi would be a great political asset, simply mark a person as one not to the manor born."[49]

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[49] Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of 'Brown v. Board of Education' and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 462; J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 4; V.O. Key, Jr, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), qtd. in R. C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997); 1-27.

The aristocratic Douglas Southall Freeman, editor of the *Richmond News Leader* and prizewinning biographer of Robert E. Lee, dubbed the state's alternative approach "the Virginia Way." Rooted in a notion of "separation by consent," the Virginia Way allowed blacks a semblance of autonomy so long as they remained within the lines circumscribed by their white neighbors. White elites styled themselves the "patrons" and "guardians" of the state's black population, appropriating unto themselves the right to determine when and where uplift of the African American community should be championed and when black aspirations should be squelched. More supportive of the establishment of segregated facilities for blacks than their neighbors further south, white Virginians generally accepted a certain level of black landownership and consumer buying power.[50]

Yet the unquestioned assumption of white superiority underlying this seeming moderation preserved a mentality of "privileges extended" rather than "rights demanded." Casting themselves as benefactors, white leaders demanded that blacks approach them as supplicants grateful for the patronage of their "betters." So long as blacks remained in their place, leaders strategically shunned the ugliness characterizing Jim Crow in other southern states and the crassness of segregation by ordnance and legislation. They insisted that tradition, example and social pressure could successfully guard racial lines. Thus, midnight riders and ordnances segregating courtroom bibles found little place in early twentieth century Virginia. Lawmakers pushed rabidly for disfranchisement but not separation. When vigilantism reared its head, instead of looking the other way, authorities generally confronted it directly.

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[50] See Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 3-9.

This model of race relations held sway through the early years of the 20th century but lost ground in the 1920's as paternalism eroded in the face of urbanization and increasing black militance. As blacks flocked to the cities in search of economic opportunity, they altered traditional housing and employment patterns and challenged the constraints of familiarity and personal contact that policed race relations in the rural areas. The black press blossomed and the number of NAACP chapters in the state rose from two in 1915 to sixty by 1950. Newly empowered blacks turned to federal court suits, sit-ins, and community organizing to signal their rejection of the paternalist bargain. Urban and lower-class whites increasingly looked to municipal governments to enact laws protecting their whiteness from the tide of this rising assertiveness. As Freeman's cohort of elites struggled to hold onto their increasingly dysfunctional model of voluntary separation, a new generation of leaders arose. Anxious to shore up the bastions of white supremacy against new threats, they blended the traditional anti-vigilante concern for law and order with a new determination to protect segregation by rendering it compulsory. Following the lead of extremists who redefined the debate in rigidly exclusionary terms, they swept into power on a platform of bureaucratizing and codifying segregation.[51]

Equally oligarchic and no more "popular" than its predecessor, this new generation of elites nevertheless broadcast a new message that well encapsulated the state's changing mood. Freeman's generation had argued that order and racial harmony depended upon each individual's acceptance of his or her appropriate "place" in society, and that such acceptance could best be secured through informal means of control. Faced

[51] Ibid, p. 243-244.

with shifting realities, the new generation concluded that acceptance must be coerced – not primarily through physical violence, which reeked of populism and backwardness and threatened elite control – but rather through legal mechanisms. The pioneers of massive resistance - the political leaders of the 1950's - came of age in this climate. Naturally, when confronted by *Brown v. Board of Education* thirty years later, they reached for the tools of control that took center stage in the 1920's: legislative mandate, bureaucratic procedure, and government action.

The "Virginia Way" protected and managed appearances at all costs. Stories of black discontent or civil rights activism rarely made their way into the newspapers. When the Freedom Riders passed through the state in 1961 in their courageous quest to test compliance with court orders mandating the desegregation of interstate transportation terminals, Virginians removed the "white" and "colored" signs from bus terminals, waited out the Riders' presence and then replaced them, maintaining segregation for two more years. Even in Farmville, employees painted over the "colored" signs and offered no overt resistance to the Riders' presence. The Way put the best public construction on cruelty, preserving decorum and order and deifying the status quo. Lifelong race relations activist, Virginia native, and respected sociologist Edward Harden Peeples, Jr. described the Virginia Way as "a dignified way to be racist." As he commented in a 2006 interview:

> You can believe in white supremacy but you don't have to hurt anybody to do it. You don't have to restrain them with shackles. All you do is control their mind in such a way that they will appreciate the fact that what you do is good for them...When you hand out the dollars or you hand out the jobs or whatever, then

people will be docile – and with no labor protection laws and things like that, it just worked.[52]

In the 1980's, state opinion leader Virginius Dabney, the esteemed editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, termed massive resistance an "aberration" in Virginia history, a momentary deviation from a consistent track record of good race relations. A racial moderate who advocated more equitable treatment for blacks throughout the 1940's and 50's, but clung to the right to segregate, Dabney argued that the course of action adopted by the state in the 1950's "was untrue to its heritage." But in truth, massive resistance was not an aberration. It maintained consistency with the major trends in state history. The commonwealth did indeed maintained a reputation for harmonious race relations unparalleled throughout the South from Reconstruction through the mid-twentieth century. But commentators defined harmony as the general absence of vigilantism rather than the presence of equality. While Virginia's leaders frowned upon extra-legal violence, they whole-heartedly embraced white supremacy. Whites maintained dominance through applying informal non-physical pressure to black dissidents and through the exercise of state and local power to legislate, segregate, impoverish, imprison, and execute. Massive resistance's grasping use of state bureaucratic power echoed the approach to maintaining supremacy employed in the similarly tumultuous 1920's.

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Virginia had the lowest level of recorded lynchings in the South. The number of lynchings in Georgia during the single year of 1919 exceeded the number recorded in

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[52] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Touchstone, 1988), p. 413; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 14, 25-26.

Virginia throughout the entire twentieth century. One-half of the state's counties never experienced an episode of deadly racial violence. Fewer than 25% were sites of more than one incident between 1880-1930. By 1910, lynchings were as rare in this former Confederate state as in Illinois or Arizona, a pattern that differed profoundly from the rest of the South, in which they continued to be a day-to-day reality well into the 1920's. Vicious mobs calling for blood gathered in Virginia, as in every other southern state (and many northern ones as well), but in the wake of the Roanoke riot of 1893, they generally received a chilly reception from local authorities.[53]

Between 1880 and 1908, sheriffs, mayors, and superior court judges requested state militia to protect prisoners and disperse mobs forty-three times, more than any other southern state except Texas. They also employed various tactics of crowd control, such as turning fire hoses on the crowd or arresting those who refused to disperse. Governor Charles O'Ferrall (1894-1898) spurred local action to new levels through conducting an executive investigation of each episode of mob violence during his term in office. In those cases where he deemed local authorities complicit or remiss in their actions he reprimanded them sharply in newspaper interviews and in his addresses to the General Assembly.[54]

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[53] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. 140-143. See also Stewart M. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995). The Roanoke riot began with the attempted lynching of black laborer Thomas Smith and ended with Smith's death, the shooting and exile of the mayor, and three days of mob demands that the mayor, the chief of police, and several other public officials be removed from office. For more information, see Brundage, p. 166-168.

[54] Brundage, p. 173, 181-182.

Anti-lynching forces, noting an increase in the number of mob deaths in the 1920's – no doubt sparked by the rising racial tensions that accompanied the breakdown of paternalism - rallied behind the standards of law and order and preserving the calm necessary to ensure a good business climate. They argued that mob lawlessness threatened to overwhelm the entire social and economic order of the state, and consistent with the dawn of the legislative era, turned to the law-making process to solve the problem. Though black leaders and a few whites, particularly Louis Jaffe, editor of the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot,* did consider the brutality of lynching inimical to civilization, most white critics limited themselves to condemning the violation of the sanctity of legal authority inherent in extralegal violence.[55]

The campaign culminated in a 1928 state anti-lynching law, the first in the South. Though significant, the law did not signify unparalleled progressivism on part of the state legislature. Lawmakers endorsed the measure primarily as an opportunity to stave off possible federal legislation by demonstrating that states could and would suppress extralegal violence. As W. Fitzhugh Brundage so aptly demonstrates in *Lynching in the New South*, "the anti-lynching law was the culmination of a nearly forty-year campaign for social order rather than any victory for racial enlightenment."[56]

Why did white Virginians prioritize social order over preserving the power to threaten and practice extralegal violence? Primarily because state economics rendered extralegal violence more of a hindrance than a help to effectively maintaining racial domination. White Virginians' commitment to maintaining segregation matched that of

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[55] See Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 156-179.

[56] Brundage, p. 189-190.

their brethren further south, but the diversified agricultural system that took hold in the state after Reconstruction profoundly altered labor relations and economic patterns. From the Civil War onward, the former capital of the Confederacy embraced the New South vision of diversified agriculture, railroads, and industrial expansion. As Brundage argues, the shift from long-term labor contracts and tenancy to ad-hoc day labor lessened "one of the chief sources of racial conflict – white landowners' intention to maintain, through extralegal means if necessary, the coercive labor practices that typified staple-crop agriculture throughout much of the South."[57]

Virginians' New South mentality encouraged greater citizen concern for the state's image than that which characterized the majority of their southern counterparts. The northern-oriented economy spurred the majority of state residents to varying degrees of discomfort over the issue of extralegal violence. Such discomfort guaranteed a commitment to trials and other semblances of legal justice, procedural trappings that shielded the state from the harsh glare of negative publicity. To many elites, mob violence "blemished Virginia's reputation for law and order, at a time when Virginia was attempting to align itself with a national economy and culture." They considered violence a backward and uncivilized response to crime. They embraced legal trials, however, as a progressive alternative system offering the potential to boost the state's reputation while simultaneously protecting established racial hierarchies.[58]

However, so long as protecting racial hierarchies remained the end goal, trapping of legality did not eradicate violence. As Lisa Dorr points out in *White Women,*

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[57] Ibid, p.143.

[58] Lisa Lindquist Dorr, *White Women, Rape, and the Power of Race in Virginia, 1900-1960.* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 29.

Rape, and the Power of Race in Virginia, 1900-1060, trials legitimized death sentences by rendering them legal and procedural, even if they remained in reality little more than "legal lynchings." But violence takes other forms than merely the physical. The legislative and governmental process bureaucratized and legitimatized mental, emotional, educational, and psychological violence against blacks. Under Virginia law, state powerbrokers closed schools, intervened in marriages, ejected black residents from certain neighborhoods, altered individuals' racial compositions, and invaded black institutions. Concern for law and order did keep the state less hysterical, less physically dangerous, and less noticed by northern observers than many of its neighbors. Nevertheless, for all its subtlety, the procedural, systematic violence of legalistic oppression destroyed lives as unreservedly as Mississippi's raw physical terrorism.

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Nearly unparalleled in their distrust of popular movements and mass politics, white Virginians prized social order and accepted hierarchal rule. The state was an oligarchy, controlled by as few as a thousand state and local officials, the vast majority of whom constituted cogs in Harry Flood Byrd's legendary political machine. Byrd, elected to the governorship in 1925 and the U.S. Senate in 1933, and his allies dominated Virginia politics well into the 1960's. Years before the Byrd ascendancy, a populist revolt known as the Readjuster movement profoundly shook the state.[59] Returned to

[59] Under former Confederate general William Mahone, the Readjusters challenged the Conservative Party's class-driven commitment to paying in full the state's pre-Civil War debt. Dominated by the financial and corporate interests most likely to benefit from full payment, the Conservatives' policies consistently favored the agenda of the railroads and large business interests at the expense of the majority of state residents. Seizing control of the legislature in 1879, the Readjusters eliminated the poll tax, readjusted the state debt, channeled money into the newly-created public school system, raised taxes on

power in 1883, conservative Democrats acted to prevent any further challenges to rule by the upper class by laying the political foundations for Virginia oligarchy. Black participation in the Readjuster revolt provided newly reinstated Democrats a reason to argue that future political stability depended upon removing African Americans from the electoral process. They waved the banner of racial self-preservation to justify the fact that the measures proposed to ensure the purging of black voters also eviscerated the white electorate. Assuring the majority of white Virginians that their loss of the franchise was a necessary casualty in the battle to maintain white supremacy, conservative elites called a constitutional convention for June 1901 and subsequently approved a new document replete with literacy, understanding, and grandfather clauses.[60]

Concerned that a majority of voters might reject the new constitution, delegates disregarded the Democratic Party's pledge to submit the document for ratification and instead unilaterally proclaimed the new constitution law. The subsequent reintroduction of the poll tax, abolished under the Readjusters, further reduced the number of eligible voters, as did the Democratic Party's 1905 adoption of an in-house primary. The new primary system increasingly consolidated the power of party leaders and officeholders and placed another layer of distance between the majority of Virginians and the political process. The measures so thoroughly eviscerated the electorate that for a near half-

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corporations, addressed issues such as lynching and economic independence, and built a coalition with black voters. Unlike the state Republican party, the Readjusters ran black candidates for office and rewarded their black allies with a share in patronage appointments. The best recent account of the Readjuster movement can be found in Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[60] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 24-27.

century, less than 10% of the adult population cast ballots in state elections. Individuals intimately connected with the ruling Democratic Party, such as state employees and officeholders, supplied over one-third of the ballots cast. Legislative malapportionment worsened the problem, providing the Black Belt (the rural Southside), disproportional power over the rapidly expanding urban and suburban areas.[61] "By contrast," observed political scientist V.O. Key in 1949, "Mississippi is a hotbed of democracy."[62]

The Byrd machine did embody some of the tenets of "business progressivism," such as management efficiency, interest in centralizing and systematizing government agencies, and a commitment to boosting industry while continuing to protect agriculture. However, it scorned progressive reformers' traditional concern for the expansion of welfare services and public works. Virginia politicians concerned themselves primarily with maintaining a stable, low-wage labor force and low taxation rates, which they considered essential to stimulating state economy and preserving the privileged social and economic position of the upper class. Fundamentally committed to avoiding debt, they embraced the concept of "pay as you go," resulting in markedly low levels of public service that reinforced hierarchical distinctions.[63]

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[61] Ibid; Jack Bass and Walter DeVries, *The Transformation of Southern Politics: Social Change and Political Consequence Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 342; Matthew Lassiter and Andrew Lewis, "Massive Resistance Revisited: Virginia's White Moderates and the Byrd Organization," in Matthew Lassiter and Andrew Lewis, eds., *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998): 1-21.

[62] V.O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 20; qtd. in Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 26.

[63] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 9, 240; Raymond H. Pulley, *Old Virginia Restored: An Interpretation of the Progressive Impulse, 1870-1930* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. 172-173; Bass and DeVries, p. 339-342.

The system of toll roads and bridges that to this day links the state's harbor areas continues to bear witness to the Byrd attitude toward finance. Byrd's lieutenants, unlike their counterparts in other southern states, did not finance highway construction through bond issues. Instead, they created special regional authorities that, in their zeal to keep the state out of the public service business, eventually cost taxpayers more than $100 million in unnecessary costs. The financially starved public schools also struggled under "pay as you go." The O'Shea Commission, appointed during the Byrd Administration to investigate the state's public school system, found that in 1928, Virginia ranked nineteenth in the U.S. and first among southern states in tangible wealth, but 45th out of 48 in the percentage of wealth spent on education. Among the eleven southern states, Virginia, the most economically stable, stood second to last. The median spending on public schools was $18.47 per capita across the region, while Virginia's expenditures averaged half this amount. The Commission further noted that the state's proportion of educational spending shrank over the preceding decade.[64]

Expenditures for African Americans were disproportionately meager. When the state adopted a compulsory school attendance law in 1922, state senators from the Southside objected on the grounds that such a requirement would force their white constituents to allocate funds for black education. They proposed instead a local option bill that allowed localities to exempt black students from the law. Although the legislature rejected this alternative, the Commission duly noted that nonetheless, some local authorities chose not to enforce the law with respect to African Americans. Despite

[64] Bass and DeVries, p. 340-342; Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 132-134; Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1968), p. 344.

the O'Shea Commission's findings, Byrd's devotion to fiscal conservatism ensured that state spending on education remained wholly insufficient. Throughout his term, the General Assembly continued to neglect its constitutional obligation to maintain an efficient system of free schools across the state. The small expenditures bore testimony to a widespread attitude of indifference. As Ed Peeples noted, "There's always been a theme of opinion in Virginia by many of the elites that we didn't need education. We ought to just get rid of public education: it's insidious and it teaches egalitarianism and we're not equal."[65]

Former *Richmond Times-Dispatch* columnist Charles McDowell, a veteran commentator on state politics, described the Byrd-dominated legislature of the late 1940's in a 1973 interview:

> There was an assumption that the state owed the citizens very little in the way of service. There was an assumption that their job was mostly to be terribly honest, good accountants, pay-as-you-go, build good roads and keep it clean. They felt no great obligation to do service...They associated Reconstruction with an all-powerful and arbitrary and arrogant government that did bad things to people, and they associated it more than that with debt, debt, debt...So the government was to be not powerful and it was to be low taxing, and it was never to be run at a loss...Most of those old men that I knew in the Virginia General Assembly understood that schools weren't very good, and that the hospitals needed help and all kinds of things. But they didn't think really there was anything much the Virginia government could do about it.[66]

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* challenged this model of statesmanship. Though the General Assembly never abandoned its extreme fiscal conservatism or its aversion to providing public services, it rapidly began to flex its muscles as an "all-powerful government." In the wake of *Brown*, the legislature

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[65] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 132-134; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 9.

[66] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 132-134.

undertook a program of coordinated activity that abrogated local option and centralized resistance as a state policy. Lawmakers who had recently considered boosting public services too intrusive a governmental act voted to close schools and purge them from the rolls of state supported institutions. Hostility to the idea of integrated public education broke down the traditional strictures on state government.

In 1957, respected Chicago reporter John Bartlow Martin returned from a journey across the South. Having set out to chronicle contemporary attitudes toward the *Brown* decision, he warned that resistance was hardening. Attempting to clarify the rationale behind southern intransigence, he explained:

> To Southerners, the Court's decision seemed to do far more than break down segregation in the schools; it rent the seamless garment of apartness. Apartness of the races is a black and white thread woven into the fabric of Southern life – its social, political, sexual, cultural, economic life. Apartness is like a vine which, rooted in slavery, never uprooted but merely twisted by the Civil War, flourished and by now entangles everyone and everything in a suffocating net from which no one, white or black, knows how to extricate himself.[67]

Perceptive as this analysis is, apartness constituted only once facet of the bifurcated black-white world of segregation. Constant interaction also defined the world. As a political system, Jim Crow went to great lengths to ensure apartness, cutting African Americans out of the political process and segregating everything from neighborhoods and restaurants to courtroom Bibles. Culturally, it created ritual, memory, identity, and coming-of-age narratives around the "differences" between black and white. But much

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[67] John Bartlow Martin, *The Deep South Says 'Never'* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1957), p. 7.

of the system's cultural meaning derived more from crossing color lines than carving them in stone.[68]

Segregation was a modern system, forged out of the demands of late 19th century industrialization, modernism, and urbanization. The system of racial control that characterized the American South at the time of Martin's observations was not a relic of slavery. On the contrary, segregation can be better understood as an early 20th century innovation calculated to render maintaining racial dominance compatible with emerging industrial capitalism. Commercial culture, the anonymity and close proximity of urban life, the encroachment of centralized federal power and the new labor and political patterns necessitated by industrial expansion all undermined the face-to-face methods of control that characterized the antebellum and post-war South. Modern segregation emerged out of these new conditions. As a political compromise mitigating against racial violence and a means for stamping out challenges to the system through holding out the promise of an improving quality of life under the mandate of "separate but equal," Jim Crow promised stability and racial tranquility. [69]

Yet the very conditions that birthed this social system unavoidably undermined the promise of separation. As consumer culture and the national market reached further into the South, the lines of demarcation between "white" and "black" began to blur and crack. On buses and trains, in stores and gas stations and other public spaces, blacks and

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[68] Carl Husemoller Nightingale, "How Lynchings Became High-Tech, and Other Tales from the Modern South," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1999): 140-148.

[69] John Cell, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 230-235.

whites came face to face in situations in which the rules of interaction were often unclear. Unionization drives in the workplace called for black-white solidarity in the crusade for better working conditions. Black domestics crossed racial lines everyday as they passed to and from the inner sanctuary of whiteness – the home. Their labor changed white women's roles and created new intimacies between black and white. Dance halls, juke joints, and boxing parlors offered their own kind of intimacy.[70]

The codes and credos of modern segregation emerged in response to these blurred lines, offering whites a way to control necessary and inescapable interaction between the races by assigning blacks tightly circumscribed places and roles in these encounters. Economic and personal factors led whites to encourage black patronage of restaurants, shops, and public transportation and black presence in white homes in service roles. At the same time, the spectre of social equality demanded that such patronage/presence be managed upon white terms, resulting in a system under which blacks could ride public buses but were restricted to the back, or order food in restaurants but only at the take-out counter. A strict code of etiquette governed interaction. As Bertram Doyle noted in 1937, "The government exerted by etiquette is not only more elementary than legislation, it also precedes, goes along with, and continues after laws and set rules." Yet powerful as this system of control proved to be, cracks underscored the facade. Whether through interracial sex, friendships, work, sexual harassment, or simple interaction in the public

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[70] See Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998) and Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for Smithsonian Institution, 2000), p. 121-175.

sphere, blacks and whites in the Jim Crow South negotiated the spaces, absurdities and contradictions in segregation.[71]

In Virginia, awareness of these spaces and contradictions fueled a renewed movement to "shore up" the bastions of segregation. As J. Douglas Smith points out, as paternalism - as a system of policing the racial hierarchy - eroded in the years following the First World War, "urban whites increasingly turned to the state legislature and city councils to redefine the terms of white supremacy; rural whites, who dominated the state's politics, enthusiastically embraced such measures." Thus, Virginia adopted its most significant pieces of "racial legislation" not in the 1900's and 1910's, traditionally considered the nadir of race relations in America, but rather in the 1920's. Such a pattern indicates a struggle on part of increasingly insecure whites to maintain control and confidence in the face of a rapidly changing society. These three statutes, the 1924 Racial Integrity Act, the 1926 Public Assemblages Act, and the 1929 Richmond residential segregation ordinance, should rightly be seen as byproducts of the Anglo-Saxon movement sweeping the state under the leadership of Richmond concert pianist John Powell.[72]

Powell and fellow racial zealot Earnest Sevier Cox, a self-proclaimed explorer and ethnographer, used their positions as founders of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs to dominate racial discourse throughout the 1920's. Unabashedly extremist in their views, Powell and Cox advocated a eugenicist "final solution" to the "negro problem," absolute segregation,

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[71] Bertram Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 11.

[72] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 15-16.

and repatriation for blacks.[73] Relatively few individuals probably saw eye-to-eye with the zealots in their justification of draconian measures in the "battle" against racial amalgamation. Nevertheless, Cox and Powell's concern for racial purity resonated with the majority of white Virginians, providing the Clubs direct access to the ear of the state legislature. Reaching their organizational zenith in 1925 with thirty-one posts across the state, plus college chapters and three posts in the North, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs desperately sought increasingly rigid laws to shore up the foundation of white supremacy. Support from governors, newspapers, the General Assembly, and many socially prominent white elites elevated racial zealotry to an honored place in state political discourse.[74]

Encouraged by this climate, in 1924 the General Assembly adopted the most draconian miscegenation law in American history. Defining a white person as "one who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian," (the first time Virginia law offered a specific definition of "white"), the Racial Integrity Act prohibited intermarriage between whites and any persons defined as non-white. It required presentation of racial certification to local registrars before the issuance of a marriage license, and made

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[73] In his 1937 racial polemic *White America: The American Racial Problem as Seen in a Worldwide Perspective* (Los Angeles: Noontide Press, 1937), Cox embraces the "Teutonic germ" theory of history, arguing that civilizations retain their strength only so long as their "white blood" endures and that white America is in extreme peril, on the verge of being obliterated through amalgamation with inferior races. Advocating repatriation to Africa for American blacks and a further restriction in immigration policy to allow admittance only to "pure" northern Europeans, Cox brushes aside charges of cruelty and unchristian behavior, suggesting that religion has been a powerful force in "mongrelizing the Caucasian" and that "the history of Aryan peoples shows that where they have seemingly been most cruel in their dealing with other races, their civilization has been most permanent." (Cox, p. 79, 72)

[74] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 76-85.

misrepresentation of one's racial background punishable by a year in prison. A measure requiring all Virginians to register their "race" with the Bureau of Vital Statistics went down to defeat when a group of legislators argued that such a requirement was insulting to whites. Nonetheless, political leaders strongly encouraged voluntary registration, and the governor and his family set a precedent for compliance.[75]

Despite the fact that the legislature refused to make registration mandatory, Bureau director Walter Plecker interpreted the act as permission to wage a twenty-year campaign of threats and intimidation. Focusing the majority of his energies on a group of 10,000-20,000 state residents who were phenotypically white, but whom he considered to be of mixed black, white, and Native American ancestry, Plecker unleashed a veritable witch-hunt. Though many of his targets had no previous knowledge of any African American ancestry and genuinely considered themselves white, he accused them all of deliberate misrepresentation of their racial background. To a zealot such as Plecker, "passing" constituted the greatest threat to the survival of Anglo-Saxon civilization, for it surreptitiously perpetuated miscegenation even among those committed to racial purity. His enforcement of the act wreaked havoc in the lives of his targets as couples faced court battles to attain marriage licenses, Bureau officials redefined children of parents both listed as white as mulatto and removed them from white schools, and new racial classifications nearly defined Native Americans out of existence.[76]

The Public Assemblages Act, though deeply opposed by some prominent whites, followed in 1926 after an extensive controversy over whether Hampton Institute taught

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[75] Ibid, p. 87-100.

[76] Ibid.

and practiced "social equality." The act required "the separation of white and colored persons at public halls, theaters, opera houses, motion picture shows and places of public entertainment and public assemblages." It went so far as to mandate segregated auditorium seating for whites who freely chose to attend cultural events at black institutions. Most white opponents of the act disliked the measure because they considered it crude and indecent, a concession to inappropriate behavior. Segregationists of Douglas Southall Freeman's stripe, they disapproved of white desire to enter black cultural space, viewing it as an abhorrent breach of "segregation by consent." If whites and blacks would only voluntarily respect the lines that separated them from each other, they argued, the state's reputation need not be sullied by crass and embarrassing legislation. However, by 1926, such opinion was in the minority. The fact that the majority of whites were both so insecure about the efficacy of previous methods of racial control and so firm in their convictions of superiority to deem such a legal requirement necessary speaks volumes about the depth of their devotion to white supremacy.[77]

The Richmond segregation ordinance, passed in 1929, provided yet another indication that elite paternalists were losing their battle to "manage" race relations. Over their objections, the majority of Richmond whites, who desired increased legal support for racial separation and inequality, persuaded the city council to bar persons who were forbidden to marry under the Racial Integrity Act from living next each other. Carefully worded to maintain a veneer of civility and tact, the act never directly mentioned race, parentage and skin color, only the provisions of the 1924 act. Aware that the Supreme

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[77] For more on the controversy over segregated seating at Hampton's Ogden Hall and its role in sparking the crusade to pass the Public Assemblages Act, see Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 107-129.

Court had repeatedly ruled municipal residential segregation ordinances unconstitutional, paternalists considered the measure doomed from inception. Why, they asked, institute a clearly unconstitutional statue that could only serve to destabilize race relations and embarrass the state when duly overturned by the courts?[78]

Black Richmonders responded to the ordinance with hostility, rebuffing paternalist offers of assistance and oversight, forming a Citizens' Defense Committee and turning to the NAACP for leadership. As predicted, the Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling invalidating the statute in May 1930 and municipal enforcement powers ceased. Nonetheless, white determination to put more state and municipal power behind the enforcement of Jim Crow remained undeterred. Black rejection of the paternalist position revealed another important trend: a growing determination on the part of black Virginians to challenge Jim Crow on their own terms. A new age of black activism and white resistance hovered on the horizon. [79]

The formation of the Citizens' Defense Committee signified a significant break with the past. Under the leadership of moderates such as *Norfolk Journal and Guide* editor P.B. Young and Virginia Union University professor Gordon Blaine Hancock, Virginia's African American population had previously noted for its willingness to seek black advancement within the confines of segregation. Black Virginians cooperated with white elites in the hope that civility and collaboration offered the best chance for expanded opportunities and improved living standards for blacks. Young, whose

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[78] For a more detailed exploration of the debate surrounding the Richmond residential segregation ordinance, see Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 204-218.

[79] Ibid.

approach has been recently characterized as "Washingtonian militance," blended a gospel of self-help and hard work with tireless efforts to create real equality within segregation and encourage the sort of interracial cooperation that he believed would eventually topple prejudice.[80]

This approach bore fruit in creating some of the nation's leading black colleges - Virginia State College, Virginia Union University, and Hampton Institute – and in facilitating the development of a lively, and at times contentious, black press. Black Virginians operated one of the strongest state teachers' organizations in the United States. Intimately connected with Virginia State College, the Virginia Teachers Association (VTA) organized four years before its white counterpart and counted among its leaders individuals educated at the nation's best universities. But mutiny swelled in the ranks as moderation frayed around the edges. As increasing numbers of black Virginians rejected accommodation in favor of direct resistance to segregation, their leaders began to move away from the old practices. By the late 1930's, Young and Hancock publicly and irrevocably condemned the old charter of race relations as "not compatible with the manhood and security of the Negro, [nor] with the dignity and self-respect of the South."[81]

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[80] Henry Louis Suggs, *P.B. Young, Newspaperman: Race, Politics, and Journalism in the New South, 1910-1962* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), p. 45; Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 8-10, 14-17, 63-65; Michael Dennis, *Luther P. Jackson and a Life for Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 2.

[81] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 277-282; Gordon B. Hancock, "Race Relations in the United States: A Summary," in *What the Negro Wants*, ed. Rayford W. Logan (New York: Agathon Press, Inc., 1969); 217-243; J. Rupert Picott, *History of the Virginia Teaches Association* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1975), p. 73, 34, 65, 88.

Around 1937, in its golden anniversary year, the VTA took similar action, throwing its power, not to mention its significant influence in the black community, into becoming a pressure group for the equalization of teacher salaries, better schools, and increased state support for black education. Through a series of salary suits, most notably *Alston v. School Board of Norfolk*, the Association prodded Virginia school boards into closing the salary gap in the defendant cities and narrowing it in other localities. The new VTA Department of Civic Education concentrated its efforts on encouraging teachers to exercise the voting franchise for the good of the race. The department's efforts paid dividends by 1944, when fully 75% of VTA members voted in the presidential election. After 1937, VTA Executive Secretary J. Rupert Picott and other leading members began to make personal appearances before the General Assembly and at hearings before state educational commissions, demonstrating a new determination to influence/challenge state policy.[82]

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By the 1970's, massive resistance proved an enormous political miscalculation. As Michael Klarman points out, "the electoral incentives of southern politicians led them to respond to *Brown* in ways that ultimately facilitated its enforcement." Violence in the streets and direct denials of federal authority provoked intervention on part of the national government. Blacks expertly identified the fissures in white unity, exploiting the cracks to advance the civil rights agenda. Politicians who promised eternal resistance proved unable to deliver on their word. The conservative crusade failed to achieve its three central goals: 1) Holding the South to an undeviating adherence to the caste system;

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[82] Picott, p.137-138; Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law*, p. 24-26.

2) Reestablishing a pre-Civil War concept of states' rights; and 3) Insulating the region from the intrusion of new ideas and social practices. But in 1954, obstructionist saw no reason why they should not prove victorious. After all, the wave of resistance sweeping the South was unified, popular, state supported and overwhelmingly determined.[83]

According to most historians of massive resistance, the first recorded official southern reactions to *Brown* were cautious and noncommittal. The major exception was the Louisiana legislature, which being the only southern legislature in session in May 1954, immediately passed a resolution censuring the Supreme Court for "usurpation of power." In the following month, it enacted three bills designed to preserve segregation. But only one night after the decision, the Greensboro, North Carolina school board voted six to one to obey the ruling and formulate a desegregation plan. The majority of Deep South governors strongly criticized the Court's actions, but Alabama's James Folsom did comment, "When the Supreme Court speaks, that's the law." Arkansas's Francis Cherry added, "Arkansas will obey the law. It always has," while Kentucky governor Lawrence Wetherby stated that, "we will do whatever is necessary to comply with the law."[84]

Virginia governor Thomas Stanley, in keeping with the initial moderate reactions issued by other chief executives, stated publicly that he sought "a plan which will be

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[83] Michael Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 462; Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South During the 1950's* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), p. 345.

[84] Francis Wilhoit, *The Politics of Massive Resistance* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), p. 34-35; James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.72; Press Release, "South Not Solid On School Segregation," 10 May 1955, NAACP Papers, Part 3: The Campaign for Educational Equity, Series C: Legal Department and Central Office Records, 1951-1955, Reel 17.

acceptable to our citizens and in keeping with the edict of the court." He quickly convened a May 24th meeting with black leaders in hopes of persuading them to encourage their constituency not to seek enforcement of the decision. Clearly, in Stanley's mind. an "acceptable" plan required no compromises from whites and complete capitulation from blacks. Meeting attendees Oliver Hill, P.B. Young, Sr., Dr. Robert Daniel, president of Virginia State College. Rev. Fleming Alexander, editor of the *Roanoke Tribune*, and James Woodson, president of the Virginia Teachers Association, unanimously informed Stanley that they fully supported the Court's ruling. Turning Stanley's goal for the session on its head, they made a request of their own: that Virginia assume regional leadership in moving toward integration without engaging in discrimination against black teachers in job placement. Little doubt can be entertained that the governor left the meeting aware that the paternalistic age in Virginia race relations was history.[85]

Constituents hostile to the ruling, the majority of whom based their opposition upon the reasoning that integration encouraged miscegenation, which they took to be a contradiction of biblical scripture, bombarded Stanley with letters. In the face of white outcry, black determination, and pressure from Harry Byrd, Stanley, like other southern governors, moved quickly down the road from reluctant compliance to "bitter-end defiance." Pressure from the Southside region of the state, home to both the state's largest black population and many stalwarts of the Byrd Organization also played a significant role in hardening his position. On June 25, six days after a meeting of

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[85] Bartley, p. 80; Robbins L. Gates, *The Making of Massive Resistance: Virginia's Politics of Public School Desegregation, 1954-1956* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), p. 30.

Southside community and political leaders declared themselves "unalterably opposed" to school desegregation, Stanley declared his determination to "use every legal means at my command to continue segregated schools in Virginia." In his zeal, he went so far as to suggest the repeal of Section 129 of the Virginia Constitution, the clause that required the General Assembly to maintain a public school system throughout the state.[86]

While Stanley made his plans, enormous numbers of white Southerners leapt to defiance in other ways. More than fifty segregationist groups sprang up in the years immediately following *Brown*, the majority of which were eventually absorbed into the Citizens' Council movement.[87] Spreading rapidly across the South to become the region's most influential pressure group, the Councils experienced their most significant membership growth in the year following the decision. By 1957, more than one-half of southern states repealed their constitutional requirements to maintain a school system. In Arkansas, twelve year old Melba Patillo Beals, later one of the Little Rock Nine, went to school as usual on May 17th, 1954. Distraught looking teachers dismissed black students early that day, warning them to hurry home and stay in groups. Beals, who walked alone, found herself chased by a white man who attempted to rape her, all the while furiously

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[86] Wilhoit, 77; Jane Dailey, "Sex, Segregation and the Sacred After *Brown*," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (2004): 119-144; Joseph J. Thorndike, "'The Sometimes Sordid Level of Race and Segregation': James J. Kilpatrick and the Virginia Campaign against *Brown*," in Lassiter and Lewis: 51-71; J. Douglas Smith, "When Reason Collides with Prejudice: Armistead Lloyd Boothe and the Politics of Moderation," in Lassiter and Lewis: 22-50.

[87] The Citizens' Councils, which began in Indianola, Mississippi in July 1954 under the leadership of plantation manager Robert Patterson, styled themselves a "gentlemanly" alternative to the Ku Klux Klan. They were primarily devoted to influencing policy, spreading racial propaganda, and organizing coordinated economic retaliation plans against dissidents who challenged the racial order of the South. However, despite their public disavowals of violence, they often engaged in overt physical intimidation as well.

raging, "I'll show you niggers the Supreme Court can't run my life." In the wake of the announcement of *Brown II* in May 1955, remaining vestiges of the "wait and see" posture collapsed.[88] Violence and defiance became the norm as massive resisters took the reins across the South.[89]

Southerners in Congress placed the full weight of their influence behind undermining the decision and blocking its enforcement. Powerful Chairman of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, Mississippi Senator James Eastland, dubbed the "Voice of the South" by the Citizens' Councils, introduced a resolution in May 1955 demanding an inquiry into the extent of subversion behind *Brown*. Eastland, who equated racial agitators with political subversives, charged that "the decision of the Supreme Court in the school segregation cases was based upon the writings and teachings of pro-Communist agitators and enemies of the American form of government."[90]

In March of the following year, the southern bloc introduced the "Declaration of Constitutional Principles," better known as the Southern Manifesto. Rejecting both *Brown* and federal authority to intervene in the South, the architects of the Manifesto, Harry Byrd and South Carolina's Strom Thurmond, encouraged resistance, declaring that

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[88] *Brown II* [349 U.S. 294 (1955)] directed district courts to "enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases." Essentially, the decision placed the responsibility for implementing the decision into the hands of its southern opponents, allowing local school authorities to draft plans for integration within their districts and remanding the authority to determine the pace of desegregation to local federal judges.

[89] Wilhoit, p. 143; Melba Patillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High School* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994), p. 22-27.

[90] Wilhoit, p. 83.

"we commend the motives of the States which have declared the intention to resist forced integration by any lawful means." The framers used the manifesto to scare white southerners with threats of outside intervention, encourage local officials' strategies of defiance, build support among states' rights libertarians, and legitimize southern intransigence through a congressional stamp of approval. The 101 signers, 19 from the Senate and 82 from the House, threatened to resist indefinitely. As they wrote, "we pledge ourselves to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation." Harry Byrd coined the phrase "massive resistance" in relation to the manifesto, when he referred to the document as "part of the plan of massive resistance we've been working on." As the 1950's wore on, Byrd's state pioneered massive resistance in practice as well as terminology. Virginia formulated strategies of legislative and legal obstructionism that soon became standard across the South, such as harassing the NAACP, pupil placement boards, tuition grants, and closing schools.[91]

In the immediate aftermath of *Brown*, Gov. Stanley appointed a Commission on Public Education to study how the state ought to respond to the decision. Chaired by Byrd stalwart State Senator Garland Gray, an avid segregationist, and weighted with Black-Belt representation, the Commission released its report in November 1955. Emphasizing the role of individual communities in determining the pace and scope of school desegregation, the Gray Plan proposed a new pupil assignment system that allowed school boards to assign students to specific schools for a wide variety of reasons (ostensibly non-racial) and a change in compulsory attendance laws to prevent enforced

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[91] Ibid, p. 52-55.

attendance at integrated schools. It recommended a statewide referendum on repealing the constitutional provision against using public money to support private schools. Members of the Commission also proposed a program of tuition grants that would provide parents seeking to avoid desegregated public schools state money to privately educate their children. Most moderates, through troubled by the proposed use of state funds for private schools, supported the plan in hopes of staving off Stanley's apparent willingness to close the schools.[92]

As ever, resisters fashioned their proposals in the Virginian mold of superficial civility. The state's white segregationists clothed their race-motivated defiance of the law in the language of constitutional principle, states' rights and interposition, arguing that the Supreme Court had overstepped its boundaries in *Brown* and the nation verged on descent into dictatorship by judiciary.[93] Instead of cross-burnings and mob actions (though some localities, including Prince Edward, did experience a few episodes of

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[92] Thorndike, "The Sometimes Sordid Level of Race and Segregation," in Lassiter and Lewis: 51-71; Smith, "When Reason Collides with Prejudice," in Lassiter and Lewis: 22-50. For more on the Gray Commission, see Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance*, p. 109-110.

[93] A doctrine stating that a state possesses the right to "interpose" its sovereignty between the federal government and its residents, first formulated by John C. Calhoun as a defense of slavery, resurrected by Judge William Olds, and publicized in the *Richmond News Leader* by editor James Jackson Kilpatrick as an avenue for lifting the debate above "the sometime sordid level of race and segregation," providing the sort of high principle that could successfully unify white southerners and turn the tide of national public opinion against the Court. Also known as nullification. See Joseph J. Thorndike, "The Sometimes Sordid Level of Race and Segregation," in Lassiter and Lewis: 51-71. In applying the principle to the situation at hand, the Virginia legislature declared in January 1955 that the state was not compelled to obey the Supreme Court until the questions raised by the ruling were settled by a constitutional amendment. In *Cooper v. Aaron* (1958), the Court ruled that states do not possess the right to nullify Supreme Court decisions.

violence), they waged war on *Brown* through resurrecting the eighteenth century political philosophy of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.[94]

Interposition provided the language through which the state's massive resisters strove to forge connections with political conservatives across the nation by presenting Virginia's course of action as a campaign against judicial activism, infringements on the rights of the states, and disregard for constitutional safeguards against abuse of federal power. The lead apostle of interposition, *Richmond News Leader* editor James Jackson Kilpatrick, repeatedly asked his audiences to lay social questions aside and "view this issue objectively in the light of constitutional law." As he attempted to persuade members of the Cleveland (Ohio) City Club in March 1959, "Free of the emotional clouds of 'white supremacy' and 'Negro immorality,' we may see clearly a constitutional problem that is not local, and not regional, but of grave concern to Americans everywhere." When combined with Virginia's historic hostility to the Ku Klux Klan, the goal of wooing non-Southerners ensured the shunning of both the Klan and the White Citizens' Councils. In the eyes of outsiders, both possessed indelible associations with white supremacy, lawlessness, and violence.[95]

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[94] Anonymously authorized by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions were attempts to block implementation of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 through asserting the right of states to nullify federal law within their borders, characterizing federal intrusion into state matters as interference by a foreign government.

[95] James Jackson Kilpatrick, "Racial Integration in the South: The Greater Meaning," address to the City Club, Cleveland, Ohio, 14 March 1959, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Civil Rights Bills Folder, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia (hereafter UVA).

Instead, Virginia's hardcore segregationists banded together in a homegrown organization called the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties. Chartered in October 1954 upon the premise that integration meant "the death of our Anglo-Saxon civilization," the Defenders peaked at approximately 12,000 members at the end of 1956. Membership was contingent upon one's status as a white, law-abiding Virginian, unaffiliated with "any organization detrimental to the peace or welfare of the U.S.A." It also required willingness to subscribe to a conservative/libertarian code of beliefs that included racial segregation, state sovereignty, and individual freedom from government controls. Members of the Defenders tended to be hidebound conservatives, fearful of any changes to the status quo. They associated the challenge to white supremacy with a Communist plot to topple American democracy, an attempt to enlarge the federal power as a stepping stone toward a dictatorship, and an attack upon parental rights, private enterprise, and the traditional family.[96]

At their 1958 state convention, the Defenders adopted a platform opposing foreign aid, liberalization of immigration restrictions, the United Nations, federal taxation, "the indoctrination of our youth with ideologies foreign to our heritage," and federal aid to education, as well as desegregation. State president Robert Crawford (a Prince Edward native) also served on the Executive Committee of the Federation for Constitutional Government, which spent much of the spring of 1957 campaigning for the renewal of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran-Walter Act.)

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[96] Wilhoit, p. 50; Broadside, "Proposal for An Organization to Defend State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties," n.d., Small Special Collections Library, UVA; Broadside, "Principles for Which We Stand," Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties," 1958, ibid.

Federation literature foreshadowed dire consequences should the protective features of the Act be relaxed. A single February 1957 pamphlet contained headlines heralding, "American Civilization Cannot Survive Without a Strong Immigration Law," "Uncontrolled Immigration Will Produce a Mongrelized Nation," and "Weakening of National Origins Quota System First Step Toward Free Immigration."[97]

Francis Wilhoit described the Defenders in *The Politics of Massive Resistance* as "eminently respectable and thus in tune with the genteel tradition of Virginia politics.....so respectable that state officials and politicians-on-the-make rarely passed up a chance to speak at their numerous rallies." Ed Peeples, on the other hand, termed the organization "just another name for the White Citizens Council." One particularly blunt Virginia segregationist concurred, telling political scientist J.W. Peltason that the difference between "gentlemen segregationists" and the Citizens' Councils "is only the difference between a call girl and a prostitute." Though an unusually candid assessment, this admission oversimplified a complex distinction. Some local chapters were comprised of community leaders and icons of "virtuous citizenship," others of men (and women – couples received a joint membership for ten dollars a year) generally considered bullies. Still others were a mixture.[98]

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[97] Broadside, "Principles for Which We Stand," Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties," 1958, Small Special Collections Library, UVA; Flier, "Rising Immigrant Tide Threatens American Civilization," Federation for Constitutional Government, 8 February 1957, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 2, Notebook Material on Desegregation, 1960-63 Folder, UVA.

[98] Wilhoit, p. 50; J.W. Peltason, *Fifty-Six Lonely Men: Southern Federal Judges and School Desegregation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 38-39; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 12.

Overall, the Defenders carefully avoided physical forms of intimidation, which did differentiate them from the Citizens' Councils. Some insisted that the distinction be carefully policed. Indeed, when chairman of the Policy Committee and legal counsel to the Prince Edward Board of Supervisors, Judge J. Segar Gravatt, traveled to South Carolina to address the Fairfield County Citizens' Council in August 1958, he received a disapproving letter from a local clergyman. Rev. John Morris of St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church in Dillon, SC, a self-described "moderate," chided Gravatt for sullying the reputation of the Defenders:

> The purpose of my writing you is to express the hope that groups existing in so venerable a state as Virginia will not too closely resemble the Citizens' Council movement in their tone and tactic. I regret seeing the identification of similar aims and purposes that is suggested between the "Defenders" and the councils through your appearance at a Council meeting…I was under the impression that the "Defenders" were other than extreme in their purposes and manner of operation.[99]

As a corporate entity, the organization rarely, if ever, overtly practiced economic warfare against opponents. Individual members, however, frequently employed character assassination, vocational intimidation, and the silent treatment as weapons against dissenters. Peeples considered these tactics uniquely Virginian, noting that, "That's what Virginians love to do, turn their back on you, pretend they didn't hear you." Adherents to the Defender's program proved more than willing to engage in decidedly ungentlemanly tactics of resistance such as denying children a future by closing schools and undermining public education. They spun the weak Civil Rights Act of 1957 as an abomination "created for an evil purpose – the political and social enslavement of 50

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[99] W.E. Haslett to Segar Gravatt, 28 July 1958, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Correspondence Folder, UVA; Rev. John B. Morris to Segar Gravatt, 12 August 1958; ibid.

million American citizens, the dissolution of white and Negro civilization, and the surrender of American freedom to a super police-state Gestapo." When civil rights demonstrations swept the nation in 1963, they called upon law enforcement officials to handle "these so-called non-violent persons" in the same way they would handle an armed criminal. They further shrilled that "[Kennedy] Administration policy and Communist Party policy apparently aims to use some Americans merely as pawns in their game to attain their goals, the result of which will mean the end of our Constitution as well as slavery for all Americans of whatever race." Though their tactics differed from other white supremacist groups such as the Councils and the Ku Klux Klan, members of the Defenders nonetheless sought the same end – the perpetuation of a cruel and discriminating system.[100]

Although only a few chapters ever took root in the northern part of the state, as the vanguard of racial extremism, the Defenders - much like the Anglo-Saxon clubs of three decades before - remained enormously influential. In June 1955, they publicized a "Plan for Virginia," which called "upon the General Assembly to enact such laws as may be needed to prevent the expenditure of $1.00 of public monies, state or local, in the support and maintenance of any racially mixed public school." Skillfully eliminating the middle ground of local option by insisting that even token integration must be resisted at all costs, the Defenders leaned heavily upon candidates for the General Assembly to declare their support for such a plan. In the months following the submission of the Gray

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[100] "Virginia Termed Front Line In Integration Battle," n.d., J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 2, Notebook Material on Desegregation, 1957-1959 Folder, UVA; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 12-13;"Information," Lynchburg Chapter, Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, June 1963, Box 1, Folder 1, Records of the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, 1956-1963, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter LV).

Commission's report, they stepped up their attack. Byrd himself, along with some of the most influential figures in his Organization, exhorted Virginians to adopt an even more forceful commitment to segregation. The editorial pages of the *Richmond News-Leader* brimmed with Editor James Jackson Kilpatrick's theory of interposition. By a margin of two to one, voters approved the referendum on calling a limited constitutional convention to amend the portions of the state constitution dealing with education. Delegates summarily revised the constitution to allow the payment of tuition grants. By March 1956, the legislature passed an interposition resolution, and as Bartley so aptly put it, "an all-out defense of white supremacy became the dominant theme of Virginia politics."[101]

The Defenders fought hard to ensure the election of pro-amendment delegates to the constitutional convention. They distributed literature, volunteered for the pro-amendment candidate's campaign in contested races and dispatched members of their newly minted Speakers Bureau "to bring a message of constitutional crisis to school, church, civic, and fraternal groups." No less a figure than incipient governor Lindsay Almond wrote Executive Secretary William Maxey, Jr. that the Defenders' contribution to getting out the vote had proven vital. Defender Segar Gravatt argued in a televised address that a vote for amendment of Section 141 would not injure the public schools, but rather serve to preserve public education. Pointing to the situation in Prince Edward, he argued that as organizers had already channeled local funds into the creation of an all-white private school system, tuition grants offered the only means to ensure a continued education for black children. When the referendum passed, Gravatt ran in the Eighth

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[101] Bartley, p. 109-111; Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, "A Plan for Virginia," 1955, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Newsletters, Form Letters Folder, UVA.

Senatorial District (Nottoway and Dinwiddie Counties) against Wyatt T. Walker, later Executive Secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, for a seat at the convention. His campaign materials referred to his opponent simply as "a negro of the City of Petersburg."[102]

Elected by a sweeping majority, Gravatt and the other Defender delegates controlled 25% of the forty seats. Many other similarly-minded delegates, though not members themselves, won election through the organization's support and cast their votes with the Defender delegates. The presence of the perpetually outspoken Gravatt kept the radical segregationists' argument forefront in delegates' minds. The process of amendment proceeded swiftly and without any serious obstacles. Gravatt probably spoke for the majority when, attempting to lift the issue to the lofty plains of constitutional argument, he argued from the floor of the convention that:

> I do not understand how there could be a more dangerous thing looming before the great people of America than this theory and this doctrine that says that the Constitution of the United States does not mean what its simple English language makes it mean, does not mean what the court, itself, in prior solemn decisions has declared it to mean, does not mean what the Congress and what the states understood that it meant; that is, it is within the purview of men, however beneficent their motives, to change its meaning and loosen the shackles of iron that our forefathers used to tie down power.[103]

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[102] Robert Crawford, "A Report to the People," *The Defender: A Publication of the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties,* 1960, Small Special Collections Library, UVA; J. Segar Gravatt, "Vote FOR Constitutional Convention," Televised Address, reported *Farmville Herald*, 30 December 1955; Nottoway County Committee for the Election of J. Segar Gravatt to Fellow Voter, 14 February 1956, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Constitutional Convention Folder, UVA; State Board of Elections, "Statement of the Vote Cast in the Commonwealth of Virginia," ibid.

[103] State Board of Elections, "Statement of the Vote Cast in the Commonwealth of Virginia," J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Constitutional Convention Folder, UVA; List, Delegates to Constitutional Convention Who Are Defender Members, ibid; E. Griffith Dodson, Clerk, Virginia House of Delegates, to Segar Gravatt, 17 May 1956, ibid.

The Defenders fielded a new plan in the summer of 1956 that called for denying funds to integrated schools, placing schools involved in litigation under direct state control, and requiring that the state operate only segregated schools. They maintained "unalterable opposition" to the pupil placement features of the Gray Plan. Those of a more moderate persuasion circled behind the Gray Plan, urging local control, but the majority of Gray Commission members themselves expressed dissatisfaction with their own report. After Stanley rejected all the local option features of the Plan, the Commission, torn by internal dissention, voted nineteen to twelve to reject its own work and instead endorse the governor's proposed bill to terminate all state funds to any desegregated or desegregating school. Proponents of Stanley's plan argued that the removal of state funds would penalize integration but not entirely prohibit it. Communities that desired a multiracial school could ostensibly operate one solely through local funding. In their opinion, this distinction would allow the plan to better stand up in federal court than a measure that required the withdrawal of all public funds.[104]

In an August 1956 special session packed with spectators waving Confederate flags and filled with emotionalism and discord, the General Assembly adopted the Stanley bill. The funds-cutting measure achieved considerable support in the House but only narrowly passed the Senate. Still, its success set the tone, paving way for the passage of twenty-three segregationist measures. Other major lines of defense erected

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[104] Bartley, p. 111-113; "Special Bulletin to Membership," Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, 1956, Box 1, Folder 1, Defenders of State Sovereignty Records, LV.

included the appointment of a state pupil placement board responsible for the assignment of all students to specific schools and tuition grants for pupils attending private schools. Perhaps the most significant of these other pieces of legislation was an interpositionist measure declaring control of any school subject to a court order requiring desegregation automatically transferred from local officials to the state, which would immediately issue a closing order. Under the adopted policy, assignment or enrollment of any child of a different race in a public school automatically rendered such school "closed and removed from the public school system." The new policy disregarded the opinions of local officials entirely. It forbade them to obey the courts or design their own plans to resolve the situations confronting their districts.[105]

U.S. Representative William Tuck, one of the most powerful figures in the Organization, pitched the Stanley plan as the only real option. "There is no middle ground, no compromise," he told delegates to the state's Democratic Party convention, held only a few weeks before the special session. "We're either for integration or against it and I'm against it...If they (other Virginia areas) won't stand with us, then I say make 'em..." In choosing to follow this advice, the General Assembly, while continuing to wave the bloody shirt of states' rights and jurisdiction, ironically eliminated every shred of local option from its programs to defeat integration.[106]

The majority of the rest of the twenty-three measures focused on destroying the NAACP's ability to function within the state, making the Virginia General Assembly the

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[105] Wilhoit, p. 139-140; Benjamin Muse, *Virginia's Massive Resistance*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 28-31.

[106] Gates, p. 133.

first to pass laws requiring the NAACP to register as a "foreign corporation" and provide membership lists. Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, and South Carolina soon followed suit. Lawmakers divided their campaign into two major areas: a zealous state investigation of all NAACP operations in Virginia and an attempt to discourage lawyers from participating in civil rights litigation. Like most other southern states, Virginia established investigating committees - entitled the Committee on Offenses Against Administration of Justice and the Committee on Law Reform and Racial Activities - to harass those considered agitators. Though primarily concerned with NAACP activities, the committees also investigated Human Relations Councils, labor unions, the Urban League, and chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union. The powers of the committees included conducting investigations, holding hearings, and issuing subpoenas. Their propensity to flagrantly disregard due process of law seriously threatened basic freedoms of association and dissent across the South.[107]

The Committee on Offenses Against Administration of Justice made its presence known in January 1957, demanding access to all correspondence and financial records of the Virginia State Conference NAACP. It also ordered officers to release "the names and addresses of the agents, servants, employees, officers and voluntary workers and associates through whom your corporation carries on its activities in this state, and also the names of your stockholders and members in this state, together with the last known addresses of all the above designated persons." The NAACP Board of Directors agreed to immediately submit the general information requested. But cognizant of the enormous potential for reprisals against individual members, it withheld the names and addresses of

[107] Bartley, p. 213-214; 221-223. See NAACP Papers, Part 20: White Resistance and Reprisals, 1956-1965, Reels 1-15.

members pending determination of a district court suit challenging the constitutionality of the anti-NAACP statutes.[108]

In his response to the Secretary of the Committee John B. Boatwright, Jr., Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins did not mince words:

> We do not think that your Committee can validly require us to reveal the identity of our members. We think that the compelled production of this information would constitute an unwarranted invasion of our freedoms of privacy, assembly, speech and press and those of our members...In order to continue to aid in securing constitutional rights of all persons against governmentally imposed racial discrimination, we must protect this organization, its members and contributors against injury of the kind incident to adherence to your request.[109]

Consonant with the demand to release sensitive membership information came a concerted effort to intimidate lawyers involved in civil rights litigation. In an unprecedented state attempt to disbar an NAACP attorney for participating in civil rights work, the Commonwealth brought charges of barratry (instigating lawsuits in order to bring in profit for the attorney) against S.W. Tucker of Emporia. When the case came to trial in November 1960, as testimony to the significance of the precedent at stake, Tucker's defense team boasted three of the brightest stars of the NAACP legal staff: General Counsel Robert Carter, Oliver Hill of the State Conference, and William R. Ming of Chicago. Without argument, the three-judge court dismissed the case "without prejudice," releasing Tucker from his ordeal. By 1960, momentum on the issue had shifted to another case, *NAACP v. Button*, which came before the Supreme Court in 1961.

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[108] Bartley, p. 213-214; Press Release, "Virginia NAACP Names Withheld Pending Ruling of U.S. Court," 14 February 1957, NAACP Papers, Part 20: White Resistance and Reprisals, 1956-1965, Reel 12.

[109] Roy Wilkins, New York, to John B. Boatwright Jr., Richmond, 13 February 1957, NAACP Papers, ibid.

Nevertheless, fallout from a trial and a guilty verdict could have potentially crippled litigation across the South.[110]

Yet the dismissal of the charges against Tucker did not overturn the statute from which they sprang, which barred the NAACP from encouraging and financing the filing of lawsuits testing the legality of segregation. Lawmakers dropped demands to release the names of NAACP members and contributors following two Supreme Court rulings in *NAACP v. Alabama*[111] and *Bates v. Little Rock*.[112] But the statute banning organizations from soliciting litigation for their own lawyers continued to handicap operations in the state until struck down in a 1963 ruling hailed by Roy Wilkins as "one of the most important civil rights decisions handed down by the High Court."[113]

Historians of the school desegregation movement know Fall 1958 for the closing of Little Rock's four high schools in the battle that would culminate in *Cooper v. Aaron*. Yet several hundred miles away in Richmond, Gov. J. Lindsay Almond, Stanley's successor as chief executive (Virginia law limited governors to a four year term), that same day signed the paperwork to close schools in Norfolk, Charlottesville, and Warren County. Under the provisions of the August 1956 legislation closing any school under

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[110] "Report of the Executive Secretary for the Month of November 1960," Minutes of the Board of Directors, 12 December 1960, NAACP Papers, Supplement to Part 1: Meetings of the Board of Directors, Records of Annual Conferences, Major Speeches, and Special Reports, 1956-1960, Reel 11. For more on *NAACP v. Button* see Thomas M. Hilbink, "Defining Cause Lawyering: *NAACP v. Button* and the Struggle Over Professional Ideology," *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, Vol. 26 (2002): 77-107.

[111] 357 U.S. 449 (1958).

[112] 361 U.S. 516 (1960).

[113] *NAACP v. Button*, 371 U.S. 415 (1963); Press Release, "Court Voids Virginia Anti-NAACP Statute," 18 January 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 20: White Resistance and Reprisals, 1956-1965, Reel 13.

court order to desegregate, nearly 13,000 white children found themselves shut out of school. As the legislation required only the closing of the affected buildings, black students in these communities, except for those whose assignment to white schools precipitated the crisis, remained in school.[114]

The concept of procedural violence is helpful here. It is important to note that this path to defiance rejected bombs, beatings, and economic warfare. Virginia's black schoolchildren largely avoided the heartbreaking and life-threatening experiences of Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine or the Carter children of Drew, Mississippi.[115] The violence committed against them rarely assumed physical form. Rather, it was centralized and bureaucratized, forged and formalized in courtrooms, committees, commissions, Pupil Placement Boards, and General Assembly bills. Consequently, it largely passed under the radar of national opinion, allowing Virginia to retain its image of "responsible" segregation and "gentlemanly" Jim Crow.

Pundits wasted no time in laying full blame for educational disruption at the feet of the "NAACP agitators." Terming *Brown* the "Myrdal, fellow-traveling, sociological decision" at a 1955 federal court hearing, then-Attorney General Almond vilified the NAACP program, claiming that, "drunk with power, hell-bent in the orgy to produce chaos, they place their own construction on 'deliberate speed.'" Almond, a loyal stalwart of the Byrd Organization whose oratory skills made him popular with crowds, swept into the governorship on a tide of fury. His campaign spared no attack on the NAACP, the

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[114] Lassiter and Lewis, "Massive Resistance Revisited," in Lassiter and Lewis: 1-21.

[115] See Melba Patillo Beals, *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High School* (New York: Pocket Books, 1994); Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1962) and Constance Curry, *Silver Rights* (San Diego: Harcourt Inc., 1995).

federal government, the Supreme Court, or his Republican opponent Ted Dalton, whom he repeatedly denounced as an integrationist. While no friend of massive resistance, Dalton certainly possessed little desire to break down traditional racial lines. But the fact that his support for local option and open schools over Stanley's school closing plan lost him the election clearly indicated the extent to which the center of Virginia politics had shifted to the right.[116]

Soon after his election to the governorship, Almond lashed out at both the NAACP and the federal judiciary for displaying no regard for public education or the rights of the masses. In a deft verbal maneuver, the governor who ordered the closings in Warren County, Charlottesville and Norfolk shifted blame to the NAACP and the courts, absolving himself of any responsibility. Portraying himself as a passive bystander, Almond lamented:

> It was with "the deepest regret that I witnessed the insatiable NAACP, with the ready and prompt obeisance of the federal courts, close schools in Warren County and the schools of Charlottesville and Norfolk, depriving thousands of pupils of the use of classrooms. I place the blame where it belongs, with the NAACP and the Federal Judiciary. They can never escape that responsibility in the minds and consciences of a beleaguered people.

Defender and *Farmville Herald* editor J. Barrye Wall similarly charged in November 1959 that, "through misguided efforts the Negro leaders have closed all of the public schools in Prince Edward County."[117]

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[116] L.M. Wright, Jr., "Federal Court to Let Prince Edward Keep Separate Schools Another Year," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 July 1955; Muse, p. 40-44.

[117] "Received from Associated Press," 21 November 1958, NAACP Papers, Part 3: The Campaign for Educational Equality, 1913-1965, Series D: General Office Files, 1956-1965, Reel 9; J. Barrye Wall, "Let's Look At the Record," *Farmville Herald*, 20 November 1959.

The previously mentioned investigating commissions vented their fury on the NAACP as well. The Committee on Law Reform and Racial Activities charged in 1957 that NAACP attorneys misled Prince Edward plaintiffs, luring them to lend their names to the suit under false pretenses. After two days of hearings in Farmville, which called twenty-three of the *Davis* plaintiffs to testify, the Committee submitted a report to the General Assembly that portrayed NAACP lawyers as predators and black plaintiffs as ignorant simpletons. According to the Committee, witnesses almost uniformly attested to three facts: 1) They had been informed that *Davis* was an equalization case and upon construction of the new R.R. Moton High had assumed that legal action was over; 2) Until contacted by investigators for the Committee, many had not been aware that their names were being used as plaintiffs in the suit; and 3) They did not know that the suit "was for the purpose of integrating white and colored children in the public schools." James Jackson Kilpatrick ran with this theme, alleging in the pages of the *Richmond News Leader* that black plaintiffs were simply "innocent pawns in a ruthless chess game by the NAACP in which checkmate is the sole objective, and the welfare of the pawns – indeed of all the Negro children in Prince Edward County – is a matter of no consequence."[118]

It may never be possible to clearly establish exactly what was or was not said in the Committee hearings. However, this scenario of community ignorance bears little

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[118] "Report of the Committee on Law Reform and Racial Activities of the General Assembly of Virginia to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia," (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia Division of Purchase and Printing, 1957), p. 9-11, NAACP Papers, Part 20: White Resistance and Reprisals, 1956-1965, Reel 12; James J. Kilpatrick, "Pawns at Prince Edward," *Richmond News Leader*, 19 March 1958, School Closing Clippings Folder, Special Collections & Archives, Janet L. Greenwood Library, Longwood University, Farmville, Virginia (hereafter LU Archives).

resemblance to the firsthand accounts left by attendees of the mass meetings in which county residents and NAACP attorneys charted the course of the legislation. Besides ignoring the powerful intimidation factor that undoubtedly influenced witnesses' testimony, the Committee's report smacked of the racist presumption that African Americans are ignorant, sheep-like, and intellectually deficient.[119]

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White citizens responded in a variety of ways to the enforcement of the legislation that most had supported so heartily in 1956. Committed segregationists devoted themselves to replacing public education with a comprehensive system of private schools. Concerned Charlottesville parents fought these segregationist academies, while their counterparts in Norfolk filed suit against the state for denying their children equal protection under the law. Anticipating a forthcoming court order, white parents in Arlington formed the Committee to Preserve Public Schools and publicly called for peaceful desegregation. As increasing numbers of parents came to view the massive resistance legislation as a threat to the interests of their children, they began to mobilize. Open-schools committees formed in fifteen communities across the state, incorporating as the Virginia Committee for Public Schools (VCPS) in December 1958. The VCPS enrolled twice the membership of the intransigent Defenders. Arguing that the education of white children should not be compromised in the fight against school integration, they insisted "that the relevant issue was not segregation versus integration, but rather open public schools versus futile defiance of the federal government, an inadequate private

[119] See R.C. Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*; Henry W. Powell, *Witness to Civil Rights History*; and the *Not Our Children* Oral History Collection, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter VHS).

school system, and the economic damage that closed schools would do to the state's ability to attract industry."[120]

On January 19, 1959 (Lee-Jackson Day - a state holiday), the Virginia Supreme Court, over vigorous minority dissent, issued a majority ruling invalidating the school closing provisions of the August 1956 legislation. The justices rejected state Attorney General and future governor Albertis Harrison's tortured argument that *Brown* had released the state from its constitutional obligation to maintain "an efficient system of public free schools," since an "efficient system" was defined in Section 140 as a segregated one. On the same day, a three-judge federal district court struck down the same provisions on the grounds that they violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Federal judge Walter Hoffman deliberately delayed his ruling on a case filed by the Norfolk Citizens for Public Schools on behalf of the city's 10,000 white students in order to coordinate its announcement with the issuing of the state court decision. By early February, thanks to the court rulings and the work of VCPS moderates and their political allies, schools reopened in Arlington, Alexandria and Norfolk. Token integration commenced without violence.[121]

Given the climate of resentment toward the federal judiciary, the state court ruling was both more easily accepted and in some ways more surprising. The men who sat on the bench deeply resented integration, and many no doubt firmly believed that school desegregation should be resisted. Yet as justices, they maintained some distance from the emotional, frenetic scene of the August 1956 General Assembly special session.

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[120] Lassiter and Lewis, "Massive Resistance Revisited," in Lassiter and Lewis: 1-21.

[121] Muse, p. 124, 137-138.

Appointed for life, they possessed an element of independence that most other state opinion leaders did not. Their geographical proximity to Washington, D.C. also provided them a familiarity with the federal judiciary and its currents of opinion that state courts in the Deep South did not necessarily possess. When plaintiffs transferred the argument for closing schools from the assembly room to the courtroom, a majority of the judges, despite their personal loyalties, found the state's defense of its actions legally untenable. Some sources also suggest that "moderates" and massive resisters engaged in a great deal of backroom communication between 1956 and 1959, plotting compromises and new strategies. As members of an oligarchic state's most elite circle, the justices would have been privy to these exchanges, aware that contingency plans waited in the wings to replace full-on massive resistance.[122]

The state's professional organization for white teachers, the Virginia Education Association, encouraged whites to trust in the General Assembly's ability to enact alternative measures to contain integration and not rush into setting up private schools. It also pled with blacks to practice "massive voluntary segregation" and refrain from pressing for enforcement of their court victories. Fearful that the expense and unknown quality of private schools would deprive Virginia children of their right to an education, Executive Secretary Robert Williams asked blacks to remember that "there would be no public schools at all in many communities in Virginia if integration is attempted." Once more, white leaders held those who sought the enforcement of court-ordered rights responsible for undermining public education, rather than those so hasty to discard the concept of public schools. Nonetheless, the increasing vocalization of a deep-rooted

[122] Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 14-18.

hostility toward free education did not entirely escape Williams' censure, as he noted that such a situation "would be highly acceptable to some few Virginians whose interest in public education has been at best only skin-deep."[123]

Oliver Hill tried a different approach. In responding to Lindsay Almond's next-day speech, in which he vowed that the court decisions would not alter the state's resistance program, Hill appealed to a shared concern for the future of the state. Though events soon revealed Almond's speech to have been the last extremist gasp of a shrewd lawyer and political pragmatist who knew that the wind had turned against him, Hill's entreaty nonetheless cut to the heart of the conundrum facing the state. Taking advantage of an opportunity accorded the Virginia State Conference by TV station WXEX to respond on the air, Hill pleaded with white Virginians to recognize a breaking point between the present and the past:

> Racial segregation is crumbling - not because the Negro wants it eliminated, but because it is incompatible with the fundamental concept of the right of the individual to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The only question, my friends, is whether or not you will repudiate the actions of your politicians and work cooperatively to bring the transition to pass with a minimum of emotional impact, or whether you continue to follow the false doctrine of evasion, resistance and defiance of the law and the principles of American democracy and suffer the change from segregation to desegregation amid the turmoil and tension of another lost cause.[124]

The segregationist forces, however, refused to admit surrender, as is evident in the enthusiastic response accorded Representative James Davis's defiant oration at the

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[123] Robert M. Andrews, "Segregation Urged On Voluntary Basis," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 5 March 1959.

[124] Oliver W. Hill, Speech on TV Station WXEX, 25 January 1959, transcript, NAACP Papers, Part 27: Selected Branch Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 19.

Virginia Democratic Party's 1959 Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner. Davis, a Georgia congressman and former chair of the 1956 congressional subcommittee investigation of conditions in Washington, DC's newly integrated schools, commended Warren County whites' refusal to send their children to the reopened, desegregated high school. Completely ignoring traditional Jefferson-Jackson Day subjects such as the Democratic Party, Republicans, and party politics, Davis used the platform to lament what he considered the deplorable consequences of integration in DC schools. Approximately 1100 party faithful, perhaps the largest crowd ever in attendance at a Jefferson-Jackson Day celebration, displayed their undiminished hostility toward integration, reserving their loudest cheers for Davis's jabs at the Supreme Court and "never surrender" refrain.[125]

Nonetheless, the courts' invalidation of massive resistance did alter the political landscape. On Monday, February 2, a day known by hardcore segregationists as Blue Monday, the Almond administration changed tactics. Lawmakers in the General Assembly introduced several measures designed to stave off integration, but all but one died in committee. Rumors circulated that Almond had threatened to veto to any new piece of massive resistance legislation reaching his desk. The governor, a lawyer whose commitment to resistance did not go so far as directly defying the state courts, appointed a new education commission under the leadership of state senator Mosby Perrow.[126]

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[125] James Latimer, "Integration Is Decried By Georgian," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 8 March 1959.

[126] Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, "Massive Resistance Did Not Fail – It Was Never Tried!," pamphlet, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Notebook Material on Desegregation, 1957-1959 Folder, UVA.

The new chairman was a well-known moderate and outspoken critic of the negative economic impact of massive resistance. Indicating a changing mood within the state, members of the Perrow Commission, unlike its predecessor, were primarily "moderates" who hailed from areas outside the Black Belt. The Commission's report, adopted in April after a difficult fight in the General Assembly, embraced local determination and "freedom of choice," rejecting a single statewide response to *Brown*. The plan accepted token integration but retained tuition grants and pupil placement boards as mechanisms to hold it to a minimum.[127]

Hard-core segregationists bridled. When New York Congressman Emanuel Cellar, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee's Civil Rights Subcommittee, praised the Commission's work, the Defenders bristled. Landon Lane, a member of the Executive Committee, wrote Gravatt of his plan to publicize Cellar's comment, along with allegations of the Congressman's "commie front record" – allegations based on Fulton Lewis, Jr.'s reactionary radio broadcasts - "in the interest of bringing Mosby [Perrow] into clearer perspective." The Defenders pledged to remove from office all Delegates who abandoned the old strategy, immediately accusing Almond and his administration of intention to create an integrated public school system. The more pragmatic *Roanoke World-News* took a dim view of their fury, noting that Almond and the Assembly had yielded in the face of overwhelming federal force. "The die-hard segregationists believed that the governor and the Assembly should have defied the federal government and gone to jail rather than yield," the paper noted. "In their hot-

[127] Hershman, "Massive Resistance Meets Its Match," in Lassiter and Lewis: 104-133.

headed, blinded rage they refused to see that this would do no good but rather would injure Virginia and its future."[128]

In Prince Edward County, L.D. Whitaker, who was wont to express his feelings in verse, lashed back at the pragmatists in an editorial in the *Farmville Herald*. Whitaker's terse lines perfectly captured the gloomy feeling of betrayal tormenting the faithful:

Virginia has a Governor
Who has a nutty name,
And now his broken promises
Fill many folks with shame.

He said, "If I am elected
Governor of your state,
I promise, while I'm Governor,
Our schools won't integrate.

But after we elected him
Governor of our state,
For our state's rights he ceased to fight
And left us to our fate.[129]

Nevertheless, despite the rhetoric of betrayal, the fires of resistance continued to blaze. Vocabulary shifted and leaders agreed to accept a small amount of token integration, but commitment to protecting white privilege and forestalling any sort of comprehensive desegregation program persisted unabated. The Perrow Plan played a central role in the continuing campaign. As James Hershman, Jr. points out, "As a major

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[128] Landon B. Lane to Segar Gravatt, 23 April 1959, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Civil Rights Bills Folder, UVA; *The Defender: A Publication of the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties*, 1960, Small Special Collections Library, UVA; J. J. Jewett, Chairman, Legal & Legislative Drafting Committee, Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties to Honorable Frank P. Moncure, 9 November 1959, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Defenders Policy Committee Folder, UVA.

[129] Benjamin Muse, "Almond Has Left Machine in the Dust," *Washington Post*, 15 March 1959.

concession to Southside [Black Belt] whites, the report outlined a procedure to allow any locality wishing to 'withhold support from the public schools' to cut local taxes and reduce public school operations to a skeletal level, in order to facilitate the establishment and operation of private schools." Though generally considered a hallmark of the state's retreat from massive resistance, the Plan revealed both the enduring political clout of Southside whites and the continuing power of the ideology of defiance.[130]

By June 1959, Governor Almond himself adopted the public persona of a champion of the public schools, arguing that abandoning public education would "consign a generation of children to the darkness of illiteracy, the pits of indolence and dependency and the dungeons of delinquency." In a commencement address at Farmville's Longwood College, he pleaded with the graduates to agree that "our freedom, our hopes, our aims, our very existence depend upon public education." The roots of Almond's political shift are indeed complicated, but the governor who once closed the schools now exhorted white Virginians to stand by them. However, his words fell on deaf ears in Farmville and the surrounding countryside.[131]

As the rest of the state undertook a strategic shift away from massive resistance and headed down the road to token integration, one county continued to "hold the line." Convinced that it upheld the true principles of liberty in the face of statewide surrender, Prince Edward chose a course of resistance that would set it apart from any other locality in the United States. Through years of turmoil and tension it stubbornly clung to its radical interpretation of states' rights. Several factors helped set the county's course of

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[130] Hershman, "Massive Resistance Meets Its Match," in Lassiter and Lewis: 104-133.

[131] Muse, p. 165.

action. Unlike many of the rapidly expanding urban areas across the state, Prince Edward remained "a slice of antebellum Virginia," peopled mostly by the descendants of old Virginia families. The state's proximity to Washington, D.C. and the mushrooming military installations in the Hampton Roads area brought scores of new residents into Northern Virginia and the Tidewater region, individuals unfamiliar with the codes governing Virginia politics and unwilling to go to such desperate lengths to preserve an older way of life. The low numbers of African Americans in the western mountain region ensured that despite their more traditional settlement patterns, the mountain counties would not view school desegregation as an imminent threat to social order.[132]

Only the Southside possessed the blend of cultural depth and demographic patterns necessary to "go it alone." As the commercial center of the state's Black Belt, Prince Edward County possessed special significance in the minds of its white defenders. Ed Peeples, who found his life inextricably tied to the developments in Prince Edward County, observed in 2006, "A lot more was at stake in the minds of people who were resisting." Local leaders possessed an unusually strong sense of themselves as glorious defenders of Western civilization, and state officials, still committed to the principles, if no longer the strategies, of massive resistance, saw the county as a hill that could defend itself and provide inspiration to the rest of the commonwealth.[133]

In 1865, Prince Edward County witnessed the last gasp of the "states' rights" Confederacy – the rout of the Army of Northern Virginia at Sailor's Creek. Ulysses S. Grant penned the first of his letters to Robert E. Lee inviting surrender while encamped at

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[132] Edward H. Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 5.

[133] Ibid, p. 5-6.

Farmville. In the wake of the famed laying down of arms at Appomattox Courthouse two days later, county residents experienced defeat as an immediate and present reality. Nearly one hundred years waxed and waned between Appomattox Courthouse and the rise of massive resistance, but the bitter taste of defeat lingered in the air. When the "southern way of life" again came to crisis in the 1950's and 60's, residents determinedly embraced a course of defiance. Perhaps in some subconscious way seeking to atone for the region's connection to Confederate defeat, Prince Edward County rallied to the standard of resistance, assuming the dubious honor of being the only locality in the nation to entirely abolish public education. For five years, the local newspaper, the *Farmville Herald*, exhorted the region to "Stand steady, Prince Edward."

CHAPTER 2

SEIZING THE OFFENSIVE: THE PRINCE EDWARD SCHOOL FOUNDATION, 1955-61

When the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held a hearing on the situation in Prince Edward in February 1961, members quickly discovered that the residents testifying before them had one major thing in common.[134] Whether white or black, they cherished an unwavering belief in the justice of their cause and fierce determination to stay the course to the end. Throughout the early years of the crisis (1959-1961), the vast majority of county residents supported their chosen cause, whether the quest for desegregated public education or the creation of a sustainable private school system, with nearly unshakeable fealty. On both sides of the divide, individuals rallied to the "front line of the battle" standard.

B. Blanton Hanbury, President of the Prince Edward School Foundation (the private school system established to educate white children after the closing of the public schools) told a group of Southside politicians gathered to accelerate the group's scholarship drive that, "More and more people are coming to realize that Prince Edward is the test for Southside Virginia and the entire South, for that matter." Reginald White, the African American owner of a drycleaning business downtown Farmville, believed

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[134] The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, an independent federal agency, was established under the Civil Rights Act of 1957 to investigate claims of discrimination or denial of equal protection under the law. The Commissioners, in tandem with state advisory committees, are charged with collecting information, conducting hearings and submitting regular reports to the White House and the U.S. Congress. The Commission has no enforcement power beyond the authority to issue subpoenas to call witnesses to its hearings. Its role is that of a fact-finding body that refers complaints to the appropriate federal, state, or local government agencies for redress.

equally strongly that the depth of black support for the NAACP lawsuit derived from a conviction that if the privatization of education were allowed to triumph in Prince Edward, it would become endemic across the South.[135] Despite the sacrifices and suffering, blacks and whites pressed ahead with their divergent visions for the future, linked only by a fierce determination to see their version triumph.

The message brought to the Commission hearing by white leaders was, in true Virginia fashion, both restrained and defiant. They touted the rapid development of a comprehensive educational program under the umbrella of the Foundation, reiterated their determination never to accept integrated schools, and suggested that blacks had no real desire for integrated schools, but had been manipulated by outsiders. They interpreted black hostility toward a proposed white-administered private school for black children as indication of indifference toward education itself, not to mention ingratitude in the face of white largesse. Finally, they asserted that the Foundation "was not formed as means to circumvent any court decisions, or as we have been otherwise accused of, to break down the public schools." Dr. W. Edward Smith, the Chairman of the School Board, went so far as to assert that "no people in the country are more interested in education than the people of Prince Edward. They have gone to great sacrifices to arrange educational advantages under conditions that they consider decent and proper."[136]

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[135] Qtd. in Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p.188; Reginald White, Sr., interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 10 September, 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA (hereafter VHS).

[136] Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," 25 February 1961, p. 86, 96, NAACP Papers, Part 23: Legal Department Case Files, Series A: The South, Reel 47.

The African American minister of Farmville's First Baptist Church, L. Francis Griffin, President of the Prince Edward County Christian Association (PECCA), brought a different message. Calling upon members of the Commission to recognize the moral issues at the heart of the conflict, Griffin argued that action in the courts was the only conscionable option left open to Prince Edward blacks. Rebutting whites' charges of outside influence, he insisted:

> We maintain that our action in pressing for relief through the courts was not the result of outside agitators, but rather the result of the vicious pattern itself. When one keeps before oneself the fact that resentment was being built up of gigantic proportions in the minds of Negroes through the years because of obvious maltreatment, it is not difficult for normal people to understand open rebellion on the part of Negro citizens of the county or any other oppressed people. For an oppressed people to continue living under a system designed to relegate them to a subordinate role and a second-class citizenship and not seek all legal, moral and democratic methods to correct the evil, they would have to be absolutely degenerate. We are not ready to submit that all Negroes in Prince Edward County, Va., are degenerates.[137]

As evidence that blacks had not descended to this degraded state, Griffin touted the PECCA programs through which the black community rallied to help the children. He called specific attention to the network of training centers across the county that provided out-of-school children group interaction and mental stimulation and the organization's sponsorship of twenty-three older students attending the high school department of Kittrell College, an AME junior college near Henderson, NC. The Kittrell program, which ran from 1959-1961, posed financial challenges for PECCA, despite the college's generosity in charging only half tuition for the Prince Edward students.[138]

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[137] Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," p. 105, NAACP Papers.

[138] Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," p. 106, NAACP Papers; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 170-171.

The presentations made before the Commission that winter day provide a window into the mood of the county in the early years of the crisis. Determination, tenacity, and a hard-fought resolve to outlast the other side characterized both camps. Though not completely absent, speakers generally kept any doubts and misgivings about the course taken private or publicly stamped them down after a brief airing. Both blacks and whites turned to institution-building to provide a sense of confidence and security for the future. The majority of the black population poured their energies into strengthening PECCA and constructing the training centers, placement programs, and remedial education projects. Most whites focused upon making the Foundation Schools viable and policing the boundaries of community opinion by reiterating a message of social conservatism, racial segregation, and defiance of the federal government. In manipulating public meetings to create the image of community consensus and relying heavily upon volunteer support for building and maintaining the school system, Foundation officials cleverly enlisted parents and grandparents as stakeholders in ensuring the success of the private school venture. By framing the new school system as a badge of community pride and a link to Virginia's revolutionary history, they ensured themselves two years of nearly absolute support from the white community.

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Carved from neighboring Amelia County in 1753, Prince Edward County was named in honor of the nephew of King George III: Edward, son of the Prince of Wales. White settlement in the area began about 1730 along the banks of the Appomattox River. Chartered as Farmville in 1798, residents named the region's burgeoning shipping center county seat in 1872. A "predominantly rural area with a history of using the Negroes in

the county for the 'hard labor' required in the tobacco fields," Prince Edward County lay at the northern tip of the Black Belt, in Virginia's politically and socially conservative Southside (the popular term for the region south of the James River.) The bulwark of popular support for massive resistance, the heartland of Harry Byrd's oligarchic machine, and the home of the largest black population in the state, onlookers often considered the Southside a "slice of antebellum Virginia."[139]

R.C. Smith, a Norfolk journalist who covered the school closings and wrote the first book-length account of the period, explained Southside culture as one that looked southward for its inspiration, noting that "the counties of the Southside tend to think in a southerly direction, to relate politically to the old agricultural South rather than to the industrializing behemoth that is the new, urban South." Harry Boyte, who spent a tumultuous year in the county as director of the American Friends Service Committee's Community Relations Program, diplomatically described the area as "removed considerably from the mainstream of contemporary thought and activity."[140]

Known as a "distinctive rural land of corn, tobacco, and sharecropping," Southside Virginia's labor system rested upon a foundation of widespread tenant farming. Tenant farmers comprised 40% of the white agricultural population in some Southside counties. At the same time, rates of landownership among blacks greatly exceeded those in most areas of the South. In all but three counties, over 37% of black farmers owned land and assessable property. Across the rural South, black landownership carried with it

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[139] "When Prince Edward Was Very Young," *Virginia and the Virginia County*, (Feb. 1950), p. 9, 20; Harry Boyte, "Prince Edward Story," January 1963, p. 7, 1963 Box, Folder 38552, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Kluger, p. 475-476.

[140] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 4; Boyte, "Prince Edward Story," p. 8.

equity and a sense of autonomy that bred independence and often portended activism. A similar pattern held true in Prince Edward. Many of the landowning families held their properties since the end of the Civil War and drew strength from their historic connection to the land. AFSC staff member Irene Osborne, sent to the county in the summer of 1960 to gather information and make initial contacts, noted that most black adults were farmers, service workers and laborers, yet estimated the number of skilled workers such as electricians, mechanics and carpenters as also substantial. Bob Smith considered the black community relatively economically independent, boasting rates of land ownership almost as high as whites. According to Smith, less than two out of every ten farmers in the county were tenants and the average black farmer was "not a hireling to an alien system."[141]

Despite the rural nature of the county, the economy was more diversified than might be expected. In 1960, three out of four persons employed in Prince Edward worked in jobs not classified as agricultural in nature. Industrial expansion in the first half of the twentieth century produced several tobacco processing plants, a box factory, a sawmill, three woodworking plants, a shoe factory, a garment factory, and commercial development of kyanite mining. Though outsiders sometimes maligned Farmville as utterly devoid of culture, it was the largest town within a fifty mile radius and served as a shopping center for the greater four-county area. The county's only newspaper, the

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[141] Brundage, p. 151-152; Jean Fairfax, Southern Programs Director, AFSC, retired, interview by author, 7-8 January 2005, Phoenix, AZ, transcript, p. 16, Author's Personal Files; Irene Osborne, "Summary: School Situation in Prince Edward County, Virginia," June-September 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38128, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 52.

Farmville Herald, served a wide readership across central Virginia, enriching the town's stature in the eyes of its neighbors.[142]

In 1960, Prince Edward was home to approximately 1400 students enrolled at the county's two institutions of higher learning for whites, Hampden-Sydney College (an all-male Presbyterian school) and Longwood College (a state-supported teachers' college for women). The irony that the nation's longest school closings occurred literally adjacent to the campus of the state teachers' college did not go unnoticed by those who protested. Besides providing employment to whites and blacks alike, the colleges ensured the presence of highly-educated faculty and thoughtful students, many of whom actively participated in community life.[143]

Like much of the rural South, Prince Edward County experienced a significant decrease in overall population and a steady increase in average resident age throughout the early and middle years of the twentieth century. Population decreased eleven percent between 1950 and 1960, from 15,398 to 14,121. Public school enrollment dropped by 1600 between 1916 and 1959. White residents outnumbered blacks by a ratio of 60% to

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[142] J. Barrye Wall, "Community of Courtesy and Culture: Newspaper Records Six Decades of Development," *Virginia and the Virginia County*, (Feb. 1950), p. 15, 25-28; Edward H. Peeples, Jr., "Prince Edward County: The Story Without An End – A Report Prepared for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights," July 1963, p. 3, "Separate But Not Equal: Race, Education, and Prince Edward County, Virginia" Online Collection, Special Collections & Archives, James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (hereafter VCU), Hhttp://www.library.vcu.edu/jbc/speccoll/pec03a.html

[143] Boyte, "Prince Edward Story," p. 7.

40%. The AFSC's Irene Osborne found Prince Edward a place riddled with contradictions and marked with extremes of wealth and poverty:

> Population is sparsely settled, with some families living well off the highways and literally inaccessible to motor traffic. A high percentage of homes do not have central heating. Many still cook on wood-burning stoves. Most families have radios and many have television sets, but a few do not have electricity. Most farm families have no plumbing. In large sections of the county, telephone lines have not yet been extended and no telephone service is available. While there are many automobiles there are considerable numbers of farm families who do not have them.[144]

Despite comparatively high land ownership rates, the county was a poor area. The lack of telephone lines and readily-available transportation augmented the communication problems inherent to a dispersed population. Many black families, dependent upon low-wage jobs and hardscrabble farming for subsistence, battled constant economic instability. Some domestic workers earned as little as four dollars a week. Non-white families earned only a median income of $1848 in 1959, in comparison to an average of $3043 among whites.[145]

J. Barrye Wall, publisher of the *Farmville Herald*, promoted Farmville as "one of the state's best and most progressive small towns," a place noted for friendliness, cordiality, happiness, and generosity. Many blacks disagreed. Where Wall saw

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[144] For a good overview of the rural southern economy of the early 20th century, see Pete Daniel, *Standing At the Crossroads: Southern Life Since 1900* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1986) or Jack Temple Kirby, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South, 1920-1960* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1987). U.S. Census Records, 1960, Vol. 1, Part 48; Boyte, Prince Edward Story, p. 7; Irene Osborne, "Summary: School Situation in Prince Edward County, Virginia," June-September 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38128, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[145] Jean Fairfax, Memo to Barbara Moffett, Paul Rilling, and Richard Bennett, 18 January 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; U.S. Census Records, 1960, Vol. 1, Part 48.

friendliness and generosity, they saw segregation, paternalism, and white privilege. The Board of Supervisors' mid-1950's blatant political football with the positions then known as Negro Farm Agent and Negro Home Demonstration Agent provides only one example of the disrespect and capriciousness that characterized white supremacy. The state Agricultural Extension Services supplied counties with the services of a County Farm Agent (male) and Home Demonstration Agent (female) who worked to educate farmers, homemakers, and youth about new methods for increasing agricultural productivity and crop yield, nutrition, and public health. Though selected and supervised by faculty members at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Tech), extension agents received their salaries directly from the county in which they were based. In Jim Crow Virginia, white agents worked with white residents and black agents with black residents; thus many counties, including Prince Edward, employed four extension workers. White Farm Agents received a salary of $2000, white Home Demonstration Agents $1440, and both black agents $1000 per year.[146]

In October 1955, the Supervisors summarily abolished the position of Negro Farm Agent, putting agent John Lancaster out of a job. A former member of the Moton PTA who worked with Griffin to agitate for a new school and supported the 1951 strike, Lancaster recognized that both the Board and his supervisors at VPI considered him an agitator. Bob Smith noted in 1965 that Lancaster was considered "little more than an agent of the NAACP" in the white community." Black farmers on the other hand, supported him wholeheartedly, sending a delegation to the November Supervisors'

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[146] Wall, "Community of Courtesy and Culture"; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 130.

meeting to testify that the services rendered by the Farm Agent were helpful, beneficial and profitable. They also presented a five hundred signature petition requesting Lancaster's retention. The Board agreed to continue the matter for further consideration, but voted the following month not to rescind its decision.[147]

A few months later the white Home Demonstration Agent, Frances Gee, resigned. VPI immediately appointed Katherine Habel as her replacement and the transition proceeded smoothly. But when her VPI supervisors transferred black agent Youtha Bell to Amherst County, the Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to consider whether to continue the position of Negro Home Demonstration Agent. Agricultural Extension Services appointed a new agent effective August 1, but citing the need for a report from the committee, the Board took no action on the appointment. By October, the committee still had not submitted a report. Changing bureaucratic tactics, the Supervisors resolved to select a six member advisory committee from the black community to assist them "in determining whether or not a County Agent and a Home Demonstration Agent for colored people should be employed for this County."[148]

Two months later, the Supervisors recognized a complete lack of progress in assembling said committee, but made no motion to correct the situation. In January

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[147] Minutes of the Board of Supervisors, Prince Edward County, 6 October 1955, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 8, Clerk's Office, Prince Edward County Courthouse, Farmville, Virginia (hereafter, PEC Courthouse); Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 3 November 1955, ibid; Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 7 December 1955, ibid; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 131.

[148] Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 5 July 1956, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 8, PEC Courthouse; Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 4 October 1956, ibid.

1957, the board finally approved an advisory committee comprised of several individuals generally considered friendly toward white interests. One member publicly castigated the black community four years later for heeding "NAACP agitators." Not until the following September, however, did the Supervisors accept the committee's recommendation to employ Lenrod Blowe as County Agent and Mary Moody as Home Demonstration Agent. The minutes of the Supervisors' meetings offer no explanation for the delay. In turning a simple administrative decision into an arduous fourteen month process, however, the Board heavy-handedly enacted its conviction that services for blacks were a privilege to be dispensed upon white timetables, a privilege that could and would be revoked at pleasure.[149]

Besides petty tyranny, economic disparity and the prolonged conflict over the schools, many black residents also remembered a more physically violent defense of segregation and white supremacy. Patterns of dominance and control were well established in the Southside and the region was one of the most dangerous in the state for blacks. A white resident of Prince Edward sent John Mitchell, Jr., the outspoken editor of one of Virginia's leading black papers, the *Richmond Planet*, a death threat in 1886, threatening him with lynched if he ever dared set foot in the county. Mitchell, who preached armed self-defense for blacks, refused to be cowed. He and his gun promptly embarked on a tour through the county. Though he returned to Richmond unharmed, the episode illustrates the climate of intimidation confronting the county's black residents. Though lynching was relatively rare in Virginia, in comparison to other southern states,

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[149] Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 6 December, ibid; Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 18 January 1957, ibid; Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 5 September 1957, ibid.

rates in the state's Black Belt between 1880 and 1930 stood second only to those of the transitory and rapidly industrializing Greater Roanoke area. Southside whites lynched twenty-three people, eighteen of them black, in this fifty year span. While these numbers were still significantly lower than those found elsewhere in the South, the individuals touched by a lynching grappled with the same anger, grief, and fear. Even in the 1950's, the era remained within living memory for many residents.[150]

Not all of the horrible memories, however, predated 1930. Just a few years before the Supervisors closed the schools, a woman desperately in need of medical care died a horrible death as a consequence of rigid Jim Crow practices at the local hospital. Farmville's Southside Community Hospital reserved a paltry sixteen segregated beds for the approximately 40,000 black residents of the surrounding nine-county area. It maintained a strict policy forbidding African American physicians from entering the institution, a policy that proved deadly when the county's lone black physician brought the severely hemorrhaging woman to the hospital. As she was alone, he requested to be allowed to remain at her side, not as an attending doctor but rather as a friend. In fear for her life, the patient begged the nurse not to send him away, but hospital administration rigidly adhered to the rules. The terrified woman died approximately ten minutes after admittance. The doctor later recounted to Harry Boyte that she had "become hysterical after he had left the hospital, and she had found herself bleeding so profusely and in the hands of strangers." She passed away with tears still on her cheeks.[151]

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[150] Brundage, p. 142, 165.

[151] Wall, "Community of Courtesy and Culture"; Boyte, "Prince Edward Story," p. 8-9.

As these examples demonstrate, Southside whites practiced white supremacy with both zeal and rigidity. When challenged, they retaliated. Though overt racial violence was relatively rare, it did occur with greater frequency in the Southside than in almost any other region of the state. Primarily, however – particularly after the passage of the state anti-lynching law in 1926 – whites policed the boundaries of segregation through bureaucracy, humiliation, and economic control. Though less immediately devastating than physical violence, these tools proved effective and dangerous. When blacks mounted the 1951 campaign for equal educational opportunities, they did so recognizing that the white power structure would retaliate. Yet even those who had suffered the indignities of Jim Crow for a lifetime found themselves unprepared for the cold clinical cruelty of the response.

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In April 1955, a delegation of whites affiliated with the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties appeared before the Board of Supervisors to testify that they would not support any tax levies that contributed to the support of an integrated public school system. Whatever questions might exist about the Defenders' "respectability" on a state level, in Prince Edward, men considered pillars of the community filled the ranks of local chapter leadership. Membership averaged 600 and chapter officers prided themselves on members' strong sense of loyalty and willingness to jump into action. Though the Defenders maintained chapters across the state, the

organization's power base concentrated in the Southside, and President Robert Crawford hailed from Farmville, where he maintained a prosperous dry-cleaning business.[152]

The men who led the Prince Edward chapter cut their teeth in developing the state program and securing the ear of the General Assembly back in 1955 and '56. Powerful people who possessed a solid understanding of larger trends, they maintained a fierce determination to "hold the line" locally, even as the rest of the state moved toward token integration and freedom of choice. Devotees of massive resistance's domino-theory approach to concession-making, they envisioned anything short of absolute preservation of separate schools quickly leading, in a county with a large black population, to total integration. As civic leaders, local government officials and members of the school board and the Chamber of Commerce, their prestige lent their words greater resonance. After listening to their message, the Supervisors, many of whom themselves held membership in the Defenders, voted to postpone a decision on the budget.[153]

In the interim, the Supreme Court's decree in *Brown v. Board of Education II*, handed down on May 31, 1955, remanded the 1954 school desegregation cases to district courts with orders to proceed with all deliberate speed.[154] That very night, the Supervisors convened in emergency session. Once again, a long procession of influential speakers encouraged the officials to refuse to appropriate money for the schools.

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[152] J. Kenneth Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia – A Report for the Virginia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights," p. 8, 16 January 1964, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 106.

[153] T.W. Brooks, Secretary, Prince Edward County Chapter, Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, to Members of the Prince Edward Chapter, n.d., J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, Newsletters, Form Letters and Attachments Folder, UVA.

[154] 349 U.S. 294 (1955).

Assurances from the School Board's lawyers that the courts would undoubtedly permit the operation of county schools on a segregated basis for another year, conveyed by Board Chairman Calvin Bass and Superintendent T.J. McIlwaine, received little attention. To the delight of most observers, the Board of Supervisors appropriated only $150,000, enough to cover building maintenance and upkeep but far too little to actually operate any sort of school system. Reaffirming the decision three days later, Chairman Edward Carter pointed again to the new building on the edge of town, stating that, "The county of Prince Edward has provided for the negro children a high school second to none in the County. I don't believe that integration will serve to elevate or make better citizens of either race."[155]

Though popular with many, the decision did not have the full support of the white community, particularly those most closely affiliated with the public school system. In an attempt to orchestrate a grand show of community unity, leading Defender-affiliated segregationists turned to the local (white) Parent Teachers Association (PTA) and the white churches to organize a community meeting for the purpose of guaranteeing white teachers' salaries for the coming year. On June 7th, at least 1300 white residents gathered in the Jarman Hall auditorium at Longwood College, a space constructed for community use as well as college. Organizers carefully orchestrated the proceedings to ensure that anyone in opposition to the Defenders' agenda would appear to be opposing both the county's best interests and the majority opinion. Under such conditions, it is unsurprising the meeting dutifully fulfilled the purpose for which it was convened. Attendees adopted

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[155] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 101-102; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 2 June 1955, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 8, PEC Courthouse.

a motion to establish a private corporation to raise the funds necessary to guarantee salaries, thus providing private school advocates the organizational structure to begin crafting a new school system.[156]

James Bash, the principal of Farmville High, considered the whole thing a "set up" designed to mislead parents. He deemed the meeting a masquerade in which a small group of ultra-segregationists presented a political maneuver as a comprehensive, community-supported educational program. Wall, an outspoken segregationist and Defender, began the evening by presenting a plan to close the public schools should the county come under a desegregation order. A line-up of PTA representatives from each of the white schools – all members of the Defenders - duly endorsed the proposal, all testifying that sentiment at their schools unanimously opposed desegregation. Other Defenders such as attorney J. Barrye Wall, Jr., businessman B. Blanton Hanbury, Farmville mayor W.C. Fitzpatrick, and former School Board chairman Maurice Large all played conspicuous roles in the evening's events. Given the Defender-dominated proceedings, some attendees might have found state president Robert Crawford's absence from the stage surprising. Though a Farmville resident, meeting organizers asked him not to speak in hopes of bolstering the appearance of grassroots public-spiritedness, of citizens coming together to meet an immediate local need.[157]

As he observed the proceedings around him, James Bash found himself startled by the unanimity projected by the PTA representatives, given that the Farmville District group only a few weeks before issued a statement opposing the creation of a private

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[156] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 116-125.
[157] Amy E. Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case: The Endurance of Resistance in a Southside County, 1959-64," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167.

school system. Angered by the meeting's orchestration of what he considered a fraudulent consensus, he rose in an attempt to call audience attention to the problems inherent to an abrupt and massive transition to private education. A significant percentage of the audience stirred in agreement as he questioned where the children would go to school, how staff salaries would be financed, how the administrative system would be structured and whether teachers would lose their state retirement benefits. But reactions changed when he pushed beyond logistical details, boldly stating that his public school loyalties would prevent him from ever accepting a check from a private corporation formed to evade a Supreme Court ruling. Bob Gilmer, the Farmville High football coach, immediately stood to counter this statement, offering his loyalties to any local organization willing to pay him a small salary. Cheers rocked the hall and Bash sank into his seat knowing he had lost.[158]

In the subsequent debate, only four others – three of whom played important roles in the county's educational community – joined Bash in vocalizing opposition to the plan. School Board Chairman Calvin Bass reiterated lawyers' guarantee that the public schools could be operated on a segregated basis for another year, arguing that plans for a private system were premature. Longwood professor Foster Gresham and Presbyterian minister James Kennedy offered an alternative resolution calling upon the Board of Supervisors to themselves guarantee the salaries of all teachers, black and white alike, but the crowd shouted it down. Longwood history professor Henry Bittinger suggested that the

[158] Ibid.

Supervisors had acted too hastily in choosing a course of action without waiting for a pattern to be established on a state level.[159]

When organizers called for a vote, they chose a "stand up" count rather than a secret ballot, thus forcing possible dissenters to weigh the strength of their opposition against the risk of social ostracism. Only ten to twenty singled themselves out by standing with Bash, Kennedy, Gresham, Bass, and Bittinger, rendering the count 1,250 in favor of the plan to approximately twenty against. The boundaries of white unity soon proved stalwartly policed, as within a year, Bass resigned the chairmanship of the School Board and Gresham switched allegiance to the private schools. Kennedy, concerned for the unity of the church in the face of rising animosity toward himself, accepted a pastorate in West Virginia and Bash tendered his resignation to the School Board. Only Bittinger remained active in the moderate coalition carefully nurtured by the American Friends Service Committee over the next few years. Bash, who had previously been well-liked, noted that after the Jarman Hall meeting his white neighbors treated him with pronounced hostility. In stores, clerks turned their backs to him and dropped his change on the counter rather than placing it in his hand. Teachers no longer sent disciplinary matters to his office and many ignored him as much as possible. Aware that students and teachers no longer respected or recognized his authority as principal, he saw no choice but to leave the district and the community.[160]

Though organizers used protecting white teachers as the ostensible purpose of the meeting, in reality little chance existed that the majority would leave the county to seek employment elsewhere. Most had local roots or were married to men well-established in

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[159] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 116-125.
[160] Ibid, p. 126-130.

the local economy and generally sympathetic toward the private school effort. T.J. McIlwaine later estimated that 70 to 75% of the white teachers would have supported the private schools regardless of an advance guarantee of salary. The Defender-affiliated organizers easily accomplished their real purpose at Jarman Hall: achieving community sanction for the switch to private education. Testifying to the extensive planning preceding the meeting, the Prince Edward Educational Corporation, forerunner of the Prince Edward School Foundation, received its charter only two days later. Organizers never intended for Jarman Hall to serve as a real forum for community discussion. Rather, they convened the meeting for the sole purpose of rubber stamping leaders' plans – and attendees complied with a minimum of dissent.[161]

Thanks to pledge sheets distributed at Jarman Hall, by mid-July, the Corporation collected $180,000. On July 18th, a three-judge federal court ruled that the county must begin "adjustments" required for desegregation, but refrained from ordering a specific date upon which the process should commence. In response, the Board of Supervisors adopted a new state policy known as "heretofore" operation of public schools, which appropriated the year's budget thirty days at a time. Turning down Lester Andrews, the new Chairman of the School Board's request for $284,222 in county funds, the Supervisors shifted responsibility for their actions onto what they termed "conditions existing within the county that may make it impossible and contrary to the welfare of all of the people of this county to continue to operate public schools." The schools reopened for the 1955-56 school year, but the Corporation, deeming the outcome only a "respite"

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[161] Ibid, p. 123-124.

from court pressure, retained the pledges, holding itself in the wings as a ready-to-go alternative to public schools.[162]

In May 1956, white residents reaffirmed their support of the Supervisors' actions. Every one of the 250 attendees at the Board's May 3 public hearing on the proposed county budget for 1956-57 stood in approval when the chair called a rising vote on heretofore operation. In a written affirmation presented the same evening, 4,184 whites additionally pledged:

> We hereby affirm our conviction that the separation of the races in the public schools of this county is absolutely necessary and do affirm that we prefer to abandon public schools and educate our children in some other way if that be necessary to preserve separation of the races in the schools of this county. We pledge our support of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County in their firm maintenance of this policy.

Publishing their thoughts in a broadside that attained wide distribution amongst massive resistance circles. Prince Edward residents employed several of the lines of reasoning that would define the white community's dominant narrative of interpretation throughout the crisis. Namely, they disavowed any intention to harm blacks and shifted blame for possible closings from themselves onto the "tyrannical" federal government.[163]

Deeming the *Brown* decision an assault upon the Constitution, they painted themselves as modern-day American patriots, asserting that if courts would not recognize what they termed, "these most fundamental, intimate and sacred rights and the profound necessity that they be respected, then we proclaim our resort to that first American tenet

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[162] Ibid, p. 124-125; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 30 July 1955, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 8, PEC Courthouse.

[163] Board of Supervisors Minutes, 3 May 1956, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 8, PEC Courthouse; *Declaration of Convictions*, Adopted May 3, 1956 by Citizens of Prince Edward County, Broadside, Small Special Collections Library, UVA.

of liberty – that men should not be taxed against their will and without their consent for a purpose to which they are deeply and conscientiously opposed." The Supervisors' attorney wholeheartedly agreed with this characterization, telling a Charlottesville Defenders meeting that advising the Board had been the highest privilege of his career. "Not in my lifetime, ladies and gentlemen," he raved, "has there been upon the scene in the state of Virginia patriots comparable to the members of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County."[164]

Lack of progress in the courts ensured another year without interference in the maintenance of segregation and the Board of Supervisors re-approved "heretofore" operation of the schools for 1956-57, and once again for 1957-58. On August 4, 1958, district court judge Sterling Hutcheson, a conservative jurist dedicated to the preservation of private liberties in the face of what he considered unprecedented federal intrusion into "the affairs of the individual," ruled that conditions in the county, particularly the threat to abolish the public schools, necessitated a delay in ordering compliance. He set September 1965 as the commencement date for desegregation, thus prompting the Supervisors to again order "heretofore" operation for 1958-59. Obstructionists across the state acclaimed Hutcheson's decision. Admirers, including one of his former teachers, wrote him to express such sentiments as "the Supreme Court should realize that you cannot hitch a racehorse and a mule to the same cart."[165]

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[164] *Declaration of Convictions*; J. Segar Gravatt, Speech to the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, Charlottesville, 23 July 1956, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 1, News Clippings 1954-1956 Folder, UVA.

[165] Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools," p. 9-12, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU; Laura V. Townes to C. Sterling Hutcheson, 13 August 1958, Box 6,

Ben Jacobs, a lawyer from Newport News, opinioned that Hutcheson could be certain of fourteen states should he ever chose to run for President on a third party ticket. Claude Parkinson of Richmond questioned the NAACP's motives, insisting that those concerned about racial progress should devote their energies to suppressing illegitimate births and syphilis among blacks rather than campaigning for civil rights. Lindsay Almond told the press that "the court has charted the only course which will afford access to the public schools and secure for all children, irrespective of race, a continuance of educational opportunities." Lawyers for the plaintiffs disagreed. Arguing that deprivation of constitutional rights could not be allowed to continue unchecked until 1965, they appealed Hutcheson's decision to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.[166]

The case took a new turn in January 1959, when the Virginia Supreme Court and the U.S. District Court in Norfolk struck down the state's massive resistance legislation on grounds of unconstitutionality. The demise of the 1956 resistance codes left Prince Edward without the protection of state statutes. The full effect of the *Brown* decision finally came to bear on the county on May 5, 1959, when the Fourth Circuit Court reversed Hutcheson's seven year delay. The new ruling ordered the county to take immediate steps to prepare for enrolling black students in formerly white schools in September.[167]

Folder 133, Series III: Subject Files, Subseries A: Professional, C. Sterling Hutcheson Papers, 1925-1969, LV; Ben Jacobs to Hutcheson, 26 August 1958, ibid.

[166] Ben Jacobs to Hutcheson, 26 August 1958, ibid; Claude Parkinson to Hutcheson, 23 February 1957, ibid; Lindsay Almond, Statement to Press and Radio, 5 August 1958, ibid.

[167] "Background Information on the Prince Edward County, Virginia School Desegregation Case," NAACP Papers, Part 22: Legal Department Administrative Files. 1956-1965, Reel 16.

In their June 1959 meeting, the Supervisors rejected the budget submitted by the School Board and abolished the school property tax, appropriating only $30,400 for debt retirement and encouraging residents to use the money they would save to support the new private school system. Rev. James Kennedy, who attended the meeting, abhorred the "mob spirit" that gripped attendees. He recalled six years later that "there was a great deal of zeal and fervor, rising and shouting...I remember someone saying 'I would rather my child grow up in absolute ignorance than go to school one day with a black child,'" a flippant statement with prophetic overtones.[168]

Tapping into another vein of white rationalization, Chairman Edward Carter's formal statement attempted to justify the action as a measure of community protection, claiming that:

> We know that it is not possible to operate the schools of this county within the terms of that principle [desegregation] and at the same time maintain an atmosphere conducive to the educational benefit of our people...We are deeply concerned that we should not bring about conditions which would most certainly result in further racial tension and which might result in violence of a nature which would be deeply deplored by all of our people and would destroy all hope of restoring the peaceful and happy relations of the races in this county.

Self-consciously taking up the mantle of law and order, Prince Edward whites presented their actions as regulatory in nature, aimed only at preserving peace and racial harmony. Clothing themselves in the trappings of civility, they shored up their arguments for private schools with race-neutral language that coolly papered over the damage done the children. But the plan ultimately backfired, for the closings indisputably did far more to

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[168] Staff Study, "Public Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia: From Segregation to Closed Schools," p. 6, NAACP Papers, Part 23: Legal Department Case Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 47; Qtd. in Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 113.

destroy "friendly and peaceful relations between the white and negro people of this county" than any token integration would have.[169]

In wake of the decision to shift to private education, old hostilities toward the public schools found sudden legitimacy. Dr. W. Edward Smith, Andrews' successor as President of the School Board, told the Commission on Civil Rights two years later that many Prince Edward whites found themselves increasingly dissatisfied with public education by the mid-1950's. They resented the presence of innovations and procedures in the public schools that they viewed as social rather than educational, "directed toward the conditioning of the child for a particular way of life." Thus, in his view, when barred from operating a public system that "could command their respect, support and affection," they quite naturally and blamelessly turned toward private education. Uncomfortable with progressive educational pedagogies and attempts to blend traditional academic subjects with a more holistic approach to "teaching the whole child," many white conservatives welcomed private education with a sense of profound relief.[170]

White leaders embraced the course charted, lauding themselves as daring visionaries, heirs of Virginia's revolutionary tradition. They determinedly painted the federal courts and the NAACP as the aggressors, willing to stop at nothing in their quest to "sacrifice future generations of Southern white children in fulfillment of a fraudulent sociological notion that there is no biological difference between the Negro and the white race." Again and again, leading segregationists reaffirmed their conviction that courts

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[169]Board of Supervisors Minutes, 3 June 1959, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse.

[170] Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," p. 85, 91, NAACP Papers, Part 23, Series A, Reel 47.

and blacks, not Prince Edward whites, forced the closings. Barrye Wall reiterated his understanding of the crisis time and again in his editorials in the *Farmville Herald*, declaring that "Prince Edward people did not voluntarily choose to abandon public schools, but were forced out of this field by the action of the NAACP and the federal courts."[171]

Herald Managing Editor John Steck, a transplanted Pennsylvanian, wrote and distributed a short and widely-disseminated propaganda pamphlet entitled "The Prince Edward County, Virginia Story," (deemed a "factual account" by its writer) in which he charged that public education had been toppled by forces outside the county. Farmville resident Bluit Andrews, who a year later would become the only African American in the county to publicly support the idea of a white-administered private school for blacks, took a swing at the NAACP as well. In a December 1959 letter to the editor, he queried local blacks:

> How long are we, as parents in Prince Edward County, going to let the NAACP and a few of their cohorts keep our children out of school? They forced the closing of the public schools with their law suits [sic]...It is high time that we thought for ourselves and do business with the white people who are our friends and neighbors...Most all of our people are fine people and good neighbors. Some just listen to the oil-tongue [sic] agitators of the NAACP, whose only reason for their part in this is to line their pockets with gold – not help us.[172]

Leaders did all they could to spread this attitude in order to convince white parents who may have been hesitant about entrusting their children's educational future to a hastily-established private corporation that their actions served a noble cause.

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[171] J. Barrye Wall, "Prince Edward Under Attack," *Farmville Herald*, 2 December 1960.
[172] John C. Steck, "The Prince Edward County Virginia Story," Helen Estes Baker Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia (hereafter VSU); Bluit Andrews, "Negro Parents of Prince Edward – How Long?," *Farmville Herald*, 11 December 1959.

According to one teenager, whites put Andrews "on the radio so he could have his say." White leaders called James Jackson Kilpatrick, the architect of interposition and editor of the segregationist *Richmond News Leader*, to the county in June 1959 to address Farmville High's last class of graduating seniors. Appealing to community pride and white solidarity, he called upon the young people to take pride in the county's actions:

> Yours is a small voice, crying boldly to a suddenly and soberly attentive land, that here in Prince Edward, free men survive who face an oligarchy unafraid... You have said, as man has almost forgotten how to say, that you will provide for yourself, as free men, a better, happier life than the super-state hungers to thrust upon you from above.[173]

The 1960 commencement speaker, William J. Story of the State Board of Education, hammered home similar themes to the first graduating class of the fledgling Prince Edward Academy. With great rhetorical flourish, he assigned the county's retreat from public education a place with what he considered history's great episodes of heroic

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[173] Anthony Jerome Smith, interview with Ruth Turner, Summer 1963, p. 31-32, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167; Steck, "The Prince Edward County Virginia Story," VSU Archives. Kilpatrick, as discussed in Chapter 1, was one of the South's most strident and outspoken apologists. Once a Catholic, he switched his membership to the Episcopal Church when the Diocese of Richmond desegregated its schools in 1954. Chair of the Publications Committee of the Virginia Commission on Constitutional Government, he wielded enormous influence. His *News Leader* editorials, books, and frequent television and radio appearances consistently argued the case for segregation in language that deemphasized race and appealed to conservative anti-government sensibilities. Kilpatrick's most influential works were *The Sovereign States: Notes of a Citizen of Virginia* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1957) and *The Southern Case for School Segregation* (Crowell-Collier Press, 1962). For more on Kilpatrick, see Thorndike, "The Sometimes Sordid Level of Race and Segregation," in Lassiter and Lewis: 51-71; Edward H. Peeples, Jr. and John V. Moeser, "Lest We Forget," *Southern Exposure* (July/August 1985): 2-3; and Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 11.

resistance: the Greeks at Marathon; Christian Europeans holding their lines against the advancing Huns; Washington at Valley Forge; and the Confederate army at Petersburg. "Here you have done that which you were not bound to do," he orated. "You have shown the state and the nation that there are still some people who will not bow down to illegality.[174]

Officials of the Prince Edward Educational Corporation (renamed the School Foundation in 1959) played upon this theme in their entreaties for financial support. "The people of Prince Edward County," they claimed dramatically, "do not believe that the fight is lost, that it is too late, that integration of the races is inevitable." Conversely:

> They believe that they fight in the cause of truth and righteousness; they have indomitable faith that both the seen and unseen hosts of truth fight at their sides; they raise no banner of hatred or bigotry; theirs in the banner of purity and integrity of race for the children of all men for this and all generations; of the liberty and freedom of men to associate, or not to associate, voluntarily, without compulsion or sanction from any quarter. She lifts the ancient standard of Virginia, the banner of truth and of liberty. The destiny and the genius of Virginia marches at her side.[175]

When the Supervisors closed the schools in June, the Prince Edward School Foundation had no buildings, no buses, no supplies, no teachers under contract, $200,000 in three-year old pledges, and $11,000 in cash. By September, Foundation officials would assume responsibility for the education of 1500 white students. As early as July 1957, however, private school partisans laid some of the groundwork for flipping the school system. They secured written agreement from all but one of the county's white

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[174] John I. Brooks, "Graduation at Farmville," *The Reporter*, (Vol. 7, No. 1), 7 July 1960, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.
[175] "The Issue Presented in Prince Edward County, Virginia," PEC Collection, 1961 Box #2, Folder 38746, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

public school teachers and administrators to accept employment with the Foundation and commissioned a survey to locate sufficient facilities. Publicizing these undertakings in a widely distributed plan of action – calculated to keep the issue of private education ever before parents by mapping out some of the specifics of the proposed transition to private education – they accorded white residents a sense of security that the Foundation could and would succeed.[176]

In keeping with this image of competence, the board sought out an experienced manager to supervise the process of organizing the system, ultimately hiring Roy Pearson, a retired Standard Oil executive, as chief administrator. Recognizing the enormity of the task and the importance of cultivating community ownership, Pearson turned to the white population. He established six committees of PTA officers, church leaders, and school principals, one in each magisterial district, and charged them with setting up that district's elementary school, reviewing applications, arranging transportation, and raising money.[177]

The committees turned first to the county's white churches, for almost all possessed educational facilities and the vast majority of white clergy strongly backed the private school effort. Supporting the Foundation (or the Prince Edward Academy, as the school itself was known) became linked with Christian duty as congregations donated the buildings they had and raised money for new classroom additions. A wave of church construction swept the county, generally subsidized by the use of donated materials and

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[176] Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167; John Connors and George Gill, "Teachers, Facilities Arranged," *Farmville Herald*, 27 September 1957, School Closings Clippings Folder, LU Archives.

[177] Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 164-167.

volunteer labor. Local business owners eager to show their support donated furniture, classroom supplies and building materials. Hundreds of parent volunteers spread mortar on cinder blocks, attached legs to old doors to create tables and served on assembly lines fashioning desktop attachments for six hundred folding chairs. Carpenters and plumbers worked round the clock to install additional toilets, drinking fountains and fire exits in the converted buildings. Volunteers organized a book drive to gather the 2500 volumes needed for the school library to achieve state accreditation. By mid-August, coordinators counted over three thousand books and an unspecified amount of cash. Many of the donations came from outside the county, ferried in on Defenders president Robert Crawford's laundry trucks from a state collection point at the United Daughters of the Confederacy's Richmond headquarters building.[178]

Hiring a teaching staff proved relatively simple, as all but two of the newly contracted sixty-six members of the Academy faculty transferred from the closed white schools. A group of residents tackled the transportation problem, forming Patron's Inc., which purchased surplus buses from surrounding counties, collected donated ones, and raised money for gas and tires. Some individuals with connections bought buses personally and donated them to the PESF. Local mechanics chipped in with free repair and maintenance services. The Jaycees assumed responsibility for erecting a football field, planted grass, and bought bleachers. One observer of the process recalled later that a group of volunteers worked overnight to dismantle the lights and poles surrounding the football field at Farmville High School and reassemble them around the new Academy

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[178] Ibid; Paul Duke, "Dixie Eyes a Virginia County, First to Shut All Its Public Schools," *Wall Street Journal,* 1 December 1959, School Closings Clippings Folder, LU Archives.

field. Sympathetic members of the school board helped build the system by selling the lights, along with substantial quantities of desks and supplies, to the Foundation at a discount rate, but drew the line at selling or leasing the buildings themselves.[179]

When classes began on September 10th, 1446 white children enrolled, a drop from the 1562 in the public schools the previous year. The animating spirit of the year encouraged students to "study, learn all you can this year, because this may be the last year you'll be able to get any education." Private contributions, mostly from community residents notified by local government the exact amount of money they would save in taxes, covered expenses and parents paid no tuition. By the following year, the state legislature enacted two provisions reportedly designed to ease the financial difficulties of the Prince Edward School Foundation. The first, passed in March 1960, permitted local governing bodies to deduct contributions to nonprofit, nonsectarian private schools in their localities from real and personal property taxes in amounts not to exceed 25% of taxes due. The second, in the name of providing "free choice" between public and private schooling, revised the tuition grant laws of 1959. The revisions allowed local officials to levy taxes and appropriate public funds to create state scholarships to finance pupil attendance at nonsectarian private schools or public schools outside their home districts.[180]

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[179] Ibid.

[180] Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools," p. 12, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU; Wil Hartzler and Bill Bagwell, Memo to Jean Fairfax, 8 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," p. 97, NAACP Papers; Staff Study, "Public Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia: From Segregation to Closed Schools," p. 7, 9-10, NAACP Papers.

The Board of Supervisors responded enthusiastically to these measures, quickly approving the 25% tax deduction benefit and authorizing a transportation grant of $35 to the parents of any Foundation pupil residing more than a half a mile from his or her school. It allocated $100 from county funds for every child attending private school and accepted tuition grants from the state of $125 for every elementary pupil and $150 for every high school student. Thus, when the Foundation began to charge tuition in its second year of operation, 1960-1961, ($240 for elementary and $265 for high school), parents could still collect all but $15 dollars of the fees due from state and county grants. White residents made great use of the program and by December, officials approved more tuition grants in Prince Edward – over 1333 - than in any other county in the state. So many parents flocked to the Supervisors to avail themselves of the county money that the Board hired Mary Cheatham to supervise the application and allocation process. [181]

Although tuition costs remained at a minimum throughout the first two years, private education still entailed significant sacrifices for the white community. As a concession to the unavailability of funds for a school lunch program, administrators approved a school day of 8:30 AM-1:30 PM – a shorter day than that offered in the public schools. They also substantially limited extracurricular offerings. Some parents were applauded this no-frills approach, arguing that lack of extracurricular distractions encouraged their children to concentrate more fully on their studies. Pearson told a reporter from the *Wall Street Journal* reporter that parents exulted over the students' new

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[181] Staff Study, "Public Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia: From Segregation to Closed Schools," p. 10-11, NAACP Papers; Board of Supervisors Minutes, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse.

devotion to their books, commenting that, "They're realizing for the first time how much it means to have an education."[182]

Others viewed the situation differently, pointing to the near absence of laboratories and lab equipment in the school facilities as concrete indication that the quality of education had decreased. When compared to the course of study offered at the state's other segregation academies, namely John S. Mosby Academy in Front Royal and Rock Hill Academy in Charlottesville, the Prince Edward curriculum was noticeably more spare. Some of the fifteen buildings housing classes (including Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, Christian, and Methodist churches, a Moose lodge, the Women's Club, and the State Theater) did not have restroom facilities. A group of parent volunteers spent their weekends removing school furniture from church facilities for Sunday services and then replacing it for Monday classes.[183]

Nonetheless, for a school starting from scratch on a $305,000 budget, the Academy enjoyed a surprising level of organization. The two Upper Schools – located in Farmville and Worsham – shared a Business Education department, a Home Economics department, and an Industrial Arts program. The majority of the tools and supplies for the machine shop were donated or loaned, allowing administrators to spend only $300 dollars for new materials throughout the first year of classes. Local supporters provided baking and sewing supplies for the Home Economics program, and the school rented

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[182] Brochure, Prince Edward School Foundation, n.d., Small Special Collections Library, UVA; Paul Duke, "Dixie Eyes a Virginia County, First to Shut All Its Public Schools," *Wall Street Journal*, 1 December 1959, School Closing Clippings Folder, LU Archives.
[183] Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167; Adam Clymer, "New Private Schools Have Permanent Air," Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 21 May 1961, School Closing Clippings Folder, LU Archives; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 4.

thirty typewriters and typewriter tables for the business classes. Student attendance across the schools averaged 95% throughout the first three months. Administrators secured state accreditation in January 1960. Segregationist leaders across the South looked to the Prince Edward School Foundation to provide a model of how to organize and operate a financially viable and academically sound private school. Interested parties flocked to the county to observe the schools' operations. Pearson authored a popular "how-to" manual and spoke to interested audiences of white parents across Alabama and Mississippi.[184]

Though only a handful of families refused to send their children to the Foundation Schools, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) staff members Wil Hartzler and Bill Bagwell noted in February 1960 that many parents went along without great enthusiasm. The Foundation employed substantial pressure to encourage support of the private school effort in financial contributions, time, and labor. Though better off than the majority of the black population, most Prince Edward whites worked long hours for low to moderate pay, leaving them little time or discretionary income to contribute to the Foundation.[185]

Nonetheless, some whites took pride and relief in having toppled the public school system. A member of the silent minority opposed to the closings told AFSC staff member Bill Bagwell that the white "power group" prized private education as a symbol of aristocracy. He pointed out that long before the closings, Barrye Wall's own children

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[184] Brochure, Prince Edward School Foundation, n.d., Small Special Collections Library, UVA.

[185] Wil Hartzler and Bill Bagwell, Memo to Jean Fairfax, 8 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools," p. 19, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU.

left the Prince Edward schools as young teenagers to attend prep schools outside the county. Longwood Professor of History C.G. Gordon Moss, who by 1962 had become the county's most outspoken white dissenter, accused his neighbors of using the *Brown* decision and the push for school desegregation as an excuse to pursue a long-cherished goal of ending public education. His outspokenness growing in tandem with the crisis, he argued that the decision had been deliberately calculated to safeguard the continued availability of a large pool of unskilled, under-educated, unorganized labor. African American businessman Reginald White, Sr. interpreted the events as a calculated attempt to ensure the perpetuation of an uneducated working class to perform the grunt work in local industries. John Hurt, who grew up in a poor sharecropping family and toiled in the fields while his landlord's children attended the Foundation schools, believed passionately that white elites "didn't want us to get a learnin' because they figured if we got a learnin' we were going to leave the farm."[186]

Some white Virginians outside the county cheered, such as Eulalia Walder of Maidens, who penned a letter to the editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* in December of 1962 affirming Prince Edward's actions. "Let's all give a rousing cheer and follow her example," Walder wrote. "Let's close the public schools. Private schools are far better for everybody. The children are not herded together and brainwashed to conform." Others winced, such as W.B. Greenwood, Jr., who suggested sarcastically that more

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[186] William Bagwell to Jean Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; C.G. Gordon Moss, Address to the Charlottesville Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, 25 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38220, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Transcript, Reginald White, Sr., interview, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; John Hurt, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 31 August 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

localities ought to follow Prince Edward's example of "withdrawing from the twentieth century," only without the trouble and effort of organizing private schools. This way:

> With no schools at all to learn in, a few years would see a new breed of completely illiterate "super-Southerners" spring up. These Stars and Bars patriots would not have to worry about Supreme Court decisions, because they would not know what the Supreme Court was, and would be unable to read the decisions anyway.[187]

Even within the county, the honeymoon period of the Foundation schools soon came to an end. Black residents, enraged that their tax money helped finance private education for 1340 white students while their own children remained out of school, raised a spirited protest. Though their lack of power at the local level ensured that white leaders paid little attention to their repeated attempts to raise this issue at meetings of the Board of Supervisors, their lawyers' actions proved more successful. NAACP attorneys filed a motion with the District Court in January 1961 requesting the condemnation of state/local scholarship grants and tax write-offs for contributions to the private schools. Judge Oren Lewis, successor to Sterling Hutcheson, responded in August 1961 with a ruling invalidating the use of public funds and tax credits so long as the closings prevented true freedom of choice between public and private schools. In the wake of Lewis's decision, the financial strain of meeting tuition payments without external support eroded some community support for the Foundation.[188]

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[187] Eulalia H. Walder, "Favors Closing All Public Schools," 4 December 1962, Collected Letters to the Editor, 1962 Box, Folder 38747, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; W.B. Greenwood, Jr., "Offers 'Solution' To the Race Problem," 10 December 1962, ibid.

[188] Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167. The ruling was specific to Prince Edward County, in force so long as the public schools remained closed. It did not affect operations in localities that maintained the operation of

Nonetheless, many parents continued to cling to the private schools as the only alternative to mass integration. Three months after Lewis's decision, the school board polled 1390 families on their feelings about mixed schools. 81% responded, and their answers reveal a "never surrender" mentality. Less than 1% of white respondents indicated any willingness to enroll their children in integrated schools, while 99% of blacks said they would. For the time being, the white community remained united. However, continuing legal setbacks,[189] black protest and suffering, and organizational campaigns waged by the black community and external allies threatened white unity. Rising tension, a growing culture of confrontation, negative press coverage, and the changing national climate engendered by the burgeoning civil rights movement markedly undermined white solidarity by 1962.[190]

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public schools. See "Background Information on the Prince Edward County, Virginia School Desegregation Case," NAACP Papers.

[189] On July 25, 1962, the District Court held that the Prince Edward closings violated the Fourteenth Amendment by depriving plaintiffs of equal protection of the laws. The ruling stated, in part, "This Court holds that the public schools of Prince Edward County may not be closed to avoid the effect of the law of the land as interpreted by the Supreme Court, while the Commonwealth of Virginia permits other public schools to remain open at the expense of the taxpayers." However, no order was entered requiring compliance with the decree, pending review by the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. See Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools," p. 1313-14, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU.

[190] Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools," p. 13, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU; "Prince Edward Whites Reject Plan to Integrate Schools," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2 November 1961, clipping, Box 1, "1961 Prince Edward County" Folder, Samuel Wilbert Tucker Papers, James Branch Cabell Library, VCU.

But from 1955-1961, the white community maintained an unusual level of cohesion and unity, powerfully strengthened by a sense of necessity. Most whites had some personal connection to the educational system – as parents, grandparents, school employees, etc. When local officials closed the schools with majority support, the minority, most of whom were not racial egalitarians or supporters of civil rights reform, found themselves with only two options: go along or face the prospect of interrupting their children's education. Relocation or out-of-county schools provided realistic escapes for only a few. Population figures among whites did drop throughout the era, but few emigrants offered any public explanation of their decision to relocate. Consequently, most whites chose to throw themselves into building the new system, submerging any discomfort they may have felt in the sheer volume of work to be done. By participating in constructing and maintaining the Foundation, they came to feel a sense of ownership and investment in its success. By relying so heavily on parents and volunteers, Foundation leaders secured themselves the loyalty of many whom without that sense of ownership might have become potential dissenters.[191]

[191] Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167; U.S. Census Records, 1960, Vol. 1, Part 48.

CHAPTER 3

"WE SUFFERED OUR CHILDREN TO BE DESTROYED:" THE PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION AND ITS ALLIES, 1959-61

While the white community expressed its solidarity and determination through building the Foundation schools, Prince Edward blacks threw themselves into organizing the Prince Edward County Christian Association (PECCA), fighting the closings through every available legal channel, and setting up programs to minimize the damage done the children. Observers and residents alike agreed that PECCA enjoyed strong mass support and that the majority of local blacks supported the NAACP campaign. Charles Herndon, who was four years old at the time of the closings and spent his first years of school in Fredricksburg, later concluded that roughly 75% of the black community desired integration. Herndon attributed this attitude primarily to the widespread influence of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s idea of brotherhood.[192]

Vonita White Foster, currently Executive Director of the National Slavery Museum under construction in Fredericksburg, Virginia, was in fourth grade when the schools closed and subsequently spent two years living with her grandparents in Baltimore. She also remembered the fervency of community belief that integration would cure the ills and inequalities of the county school system. Unlike Herndon, however, Foster attributed this commitment to practical concerns rather than ideological convictions. In the early 1990's, she maintained that blacks might not have challenged

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[192] Jean Fairfax to Barbara Moffett, Philadelphia, "Visit to Prince Edward County, Virginia," 11 February 1960, NAACP Papers, Part 24: Special Subjects, 1956-1965, Series B: Foreign Affairs - Leagues and Organizations, Reel 27; Charles Herndon, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 20 August 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

segregation if "separate but equal" had merely lived up to its promise. James White, who accompanied his teacher father to schools in Luray and Sussex County during the closings, recalled a generational split dividing black opinion. According to White, the majority of those opposed to the desegregation campaign were older people who had more to lose and whose incomes depended most directly upon the white power structure.[193]

Black residents used PECCA to work toward the restoration of public schools, engineer a comprehensive poll tax and voter registration campaign, and supervise the placement of older students in accredited schools. They also utilized their new group to set up study-play groups for the remaining children and coordinate "the efforts on a county-wide basis of those organizations, groups and individuals interested in restoring public education." Explicitly opposed to segregation, PECCA adopted a religious emphasis in hopes of staving off hatred and violence from the forces of opposition. Like countless other civil rights groups forming across the nation, Prince Edward activists chose the designation "Christian Association" as a declaration of the confluence of biblical faith and the crusade for racial justice, as a public relations tool, and as a strategy for drawing upon the flourishing social, political and voluntary networks of the black church.[194]

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[193] Vonita White Dandridge [Foster], interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 29 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; James White, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 19 August 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection.

[194] Memorandum, "Prince Edward County Christian Association," n.d., Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; Fairfax, Memo to Barbara Moffett, Paul Rilling, and Richard Bennett, "Crisis in Prince Edward County, VA Conference," 18 January 1960,

Members immediately elected Rev. L. Francis Griffin President and Rev. A.I. Dunlap of Beulah A.M.E. Church First Vice President. Edwilda Allen – who served as eight grade coordinator in the 1951 strike and saw her mother Vera fired from her teaching position in retribution - filled the role of Secretary. Fully cognizant of the national significance of the county's struggle, they vowed that "what we do in Prince Edward County, we do not alone for ourselves, but for all disadvantaged and underprivileged people everywhere." As organizer of the Prince Edward County NAACP chapter, Griffin possessed strong ties to officials of the Virginia State Conference NAACP, who looked upon the new group as a vehicle for "implementing the work of the NAACP in the county." He served as the NAACP's Special Project Coordinator for Prince Edward, and won election as President of the State Conference of Branches in 1962.[195]

Given this proprietary attitude toward the struggle in Prince Edward, State Conference leaders reacted with alarm when the Virginia Christian Leadership Conference (VCLC), an affiliate of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), proposed a controversial plan to encourage federal intervention in the county. SCLC Executive Director Wyatt Walker and VCLC President

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1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "Notes from Southern Interagency Conference, 1-16 September 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38117, ibid.

[195] "Operation 1700 Special Report," 9 May 1960, p. 4-5, NAACP Papers, Part 27: Selected Branch Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 19; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 21; Program, Virginia State Conference 24th Annual NAACP Convention, 9-11 October 1959, NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 19; Pamela Stallsmith, "Education in Virginia: A Century of Change," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 August 1999; Robert D. Robertson to John Morsell, 15 February 1961, NAACP Papers, Part III: The Campaign for Educational Equality, Series D: General Office Files, 1956-1965, Reel 9; "Action Program for the State of Virginia," June 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 19.

Rev. Milton Reid approached Griffin and the Virginia State Conference in February 1961 with their vision for a massive "Sit-In On Congress." Walker and Reid envisioned busloads of Prince Edward parents and children refusing to leave the chambers of the House and Senate until granted an audience with either the President or a respected representative of the Administration. Suggesting that "the mere presence of actual parents and children from Prince Edward County would call to the attention of the Chief Executive his responsibility to act," the planning committee hypothesized that the sight of the children would encourage Congress to take action on a bill granting a measure of relief to beleaguered county residents. They also insisted that such an action could "generate enough moral pressure through the molding of public opinion that the case entered in behalf of the children of said county by the NAACP might be given priority on the court docket and a clear decision rendered."[196]

Both the NAACP and PECCA went on the record in vocal opposition to the proposal, on the grounds that it diverted attention from the critical task of maintaining training centers for the younger children. Chief Counsel Oliver Hill advised Griffin that such a move would be "ill-advisable at this time," and that he would counsel all plaintiffs in the case to refrain from participation. As Griffin wrote to Wyatt Walker, "the Legal Staff is of the opinion that our chances for getting justice in the courts is better now than it has ever been since the inception of the Case." Organizational rivalries and personal slights undoubtedly played a significant role in engendering the negative response. Failure to include certain individuals in planning meetings, premature public

[196] Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Atlanta, Memo to Participating Agencies, n.d., NAACP Papers, Part 3: The Campaign For Educational Equality, 1913-1965, Series D: General Office Files, 1956-1965, Reel 9.

announcement of still-confidential plans, and supposedly fabricated endorsements created insurmountable hurdles. As Milton Reid ruefully commented to Virginia State Conference Executive Secretary Lester Banks, "the more we talk about Prince Edward, the further apart we become on this matter."[197]

The combined opposition of the two groups most trusted by local blacks doomed the plan's chances for attracting the support of county residents. Griffin told Walker that "there is too much opposition on the part of the local Negro citizens to even warrant an attempt at such a project at this time." Casting SCLC/VCLC in the role of outsider, he noted that, "I am compelled to advise that no cooperation from the litigants, the other out-of-school youth, the parents of these young persons, or from the recognized leadership of the County can be anticipated in any sit-in movement on Congress at this time." Without participants, the proposed sit-ins became a moot point, and discussion of the plan quietly faded. Not until the summer of 1963 did Prince Edward residents take up direct action tools such as sit-ins, boycotts and picket lines.[198]

In a letter to Banks written the same day as his forceful response to Walker, Griffin alluded to NAACP concern about retaining primacy on the local level. "We must step up our (the NAACP's) program in the County," he wrote:

> I am already under pressure from leaders of the SCLC and many of my fellow clergymen, and it is going to cost me in many ways in the future. I anticipate increased pressure; however, I am willing to face the "lions" if we can step up our activity because this will help to override any criticism against me or the

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[197] L. Francis Griffin to Wyatt Tee Walker, 22 March 1961, NAACP Papers, Part 3: The Campaign For Educational Equality, 1913-1965, Series D: General Office Files, 1956-1965, Reel 9; Griffin to Milton A. Reid, 24 February 1961, ibid; Reid to W. Lester Banks, 27 February 1961, ibid.

[198] Griffin to Walker, 22 March 1961, NAACP Papers, Part 3: The Campaign For Educational Equality, 1913-1965, Series D: General Office Files, 1956-1965, Reel 9.

> NAACP...I am certain that I can trust you to do all you can to get state and national offices to see the importance of our keeping the ball in our possession and that we cannot afford any fumbles at this time.

Such possessiveness seems more justifiable when it is recognized that the majority of funds in PECCA's $25,000 budget originated with the NAACP National Office and the Virginia State Conference. The NAACP invested enormous amounts of time and money in the county, both directly through PECCA and indirectly through the costs of mounting and maintaining such an extensive legal suit. Consequently, it eagerly welcomed offers of partnership from other groups who sought to lend assistance but kept its distance from those who sought a leadership role that could have challenged its own.[199]

Unlike VCLC staff members, American Friends Service Committee representatives succeeded in maintaining a cordial relationship with the NAACP because they mounted an action program that complemented rather than challenged NAACP efforts. AFSC staff members maintained their distance from the legal proceedings and devoted the majority of their attention to aspects of the struggle that either fell outside the NAACP's radar screen. The historic reservoir of goodwill and cooperation existing between the two organizations – many veteran staff members maintained personal friendships with colleagues in the other association – also helped keep relations smooth.

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[199] Griffin to Banks, 22 March 1961, ibid.; Fairfax to the Southern Interagency Conference and Concerned National and Virginia Organizations, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38121, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Helen Baker to Fairfax, 17 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38127, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Banks to Roy Wilkins, 30 June 1961, NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 20; Julia Tucker to Wilkins, 23 May 1961, ibid; Oliver W. Hill, Summary of Fees and Expenses Submitted to the Virginia State Conference, 19 May 1960, ibid, Reel 19.

Jean Fairfax, the AFSC's Director of Southern Civil Rights Programs, reflected later that the conflict between the NAACP and the VCLC was at root a contest for Griffin's loyalties:

> Some people felt that the NAACP kept King out or kept SCLC out. I do not know whether that is a matter of fact. I do know that there is this perception that both groups were struggling for control – to be sure that Rev. Griffin was "their man," so to speak...In a place like Prince Edward, where you had the clearly designated leader in Griff, it would be understandable that all the groups wanted to be sure that he was their man. But I never had a feeling that he felt torn. He was NAACP and active in the state, active nationally.

The county's strong links to the NAACP - both personal and financial - helped to ensure that the local program remained in step with the needs and requirements of the lawsuit. Thus, despite their anguished concern for the welfare of their children, the parents and grandparents who filled PECCA's ranks consistently refused to deviate from a rigid opposition to privately operated schools. Instead, they threw themselves behind the NAACP policy of not encouraging "the setting up of separate makeshift schools for colored children displaced through school closings in order to avoid integration."[200]

When a group of prominent white segregationists chartered Southside Schools, Inc. in December 1959 as a private school option for blacks, parents, solidly united behind PECCA and Rev. Griffin, refused to enroll their children. Although luminaries such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, and Oliver Hill strongly encouraged this course of action, the final decision belonged to the farmers, laborers, domestic workers,

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[200] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 4, 18; Report of the Executive Secretary for the Month of December 1958," Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, 5 January 1959, pg. 3, NAACP Papers, Supplement to Part 1: Meetings of the Board of Directors, Records of Annual Conferences, Major Speeches, and Special Reports, 1956-1960, Reel 11; Prince Edward County Christian Association, "Operation 1700 Special Report," 9 May 1960, NAACP Papers, Part 27: Selected Branch Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 19.

and professional people of the county. Most PECCA members, Griffin included, were anguished parents of school-age children. Torn between their children's immediate needs and their sincere commitment to dismantling Jim Crow, they suffered indescribable crises of conscience. Yet they hung together. In a 1989 interview, James Ghee, barred from school at age fourteen, reflected that:

> When the white power structure offered the blacks of Prince Edward County the opportunity to have their own segregated black school, and only one black family stepped forward to take advantage of it, it meant something was unique about Prince Edward. Because other places, we would have imagined, at least a hundred would have gone, but here only one black family, even in the midst of their own children not going to school. Only one broke rank to say, 'I'll send mine.'[201]

Despite the power structure's careful selection of a Board of Directors comprised of men (and one woman) well-positioned to exert pressure on the black community, the proposed school received a total of one application, from afore-mentioned segregationist Bluit Andrews for his granddaughter.[202] Whites gaped at the rebuff, but black leaders wondered publicly why white leaders assumed that a group that had refused to accept segregated public schools would look favorably upon segregated private ones. The very vagueness of the Southside Schools proposal further damaged its credibility amongst blacks. As one contemporary commentator noted, "The offer was a mere paper offer and

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[201] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 173, 198; Raymond Wolters, *The Burden of Brown: Thirty Years of School Desegregation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), p. 105; James Ghee, Interview by Jean Fairfax, 26 September 1989, transcript, 1962 Box, Folder 38591, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[202] The Board of Directors was comprised of R.B. Hargrove, President; J.V. Lewis, Vice President; J. Barrye Wall, Jr., Secretary; R.M. Bradshaw, Treasurer; W.J. Sydnor; Graham Raiford; J. Nat Wilkerson; C.W. Glenn; Bessie Taylor; A.N. Fore; T.W. Brooks, Jr.; Robert Taylor; P.T. Atkinson; Fielder Hubbard; Ralph Carlton; Richard Nelson and John Gates. See Harry F. Byrd, "In Defense of Prince Edward County, Virginia," *Congressional Record*, Proceedings of the 87th Congress, First Session, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38746, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

nothing was done in any sense to actually organize the private schools, such as obtaining school teachers or determining the location of the buildings or of acquiring money to operate them." Most significantly, the entire endeavor smacked of paternalism and insincerity. The all-white Board, led by R.B. Hargrove, Jr. and J. Barrye Wall, Jr., virtually duplicated the membership of the Foundation Board, comprised of the very individuals whom the black community had the greatest reason to distrust. It did not seek out community participation in the planning process or invite any blacks to become members.[203]

Organizers did contact a few individuals whom they thought might be supportive, but only to serve as consultants, not as potential Board members. Though considered reasonable and cooperative by whites, none of these individuals possessed real status as opinion leaders in the black community. Hargrove defended his failure to communicate with recognized leaders, such as Griffin, by insisting that "we knew how he felt." Instead, Board members devoted themselves to obtaining a charter and distributing letters and enrollment forms to every parent of a school-age child in the county. As the deadline neared with only one application form received, Hargrove stressed that parents would not be required to pay the tuition cost of $240 per child.[204]

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[203] Virginia State Conference, NAACP, "A Proposal for the Temporary and Remedial Relief for the Out-of-School Negro Youth of Prince Edward County," NAACP Papers, Part 27: Selected Branch Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 19; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 171-174; Edgar A. Schuler and Robert L. Green, "A Southern Educator and School Integration: An Interview," *Phylon*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1967): 28-40.

[204] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 171-174; "Applications For Negro Schools Now Needed for Plans," *Farmville Herald*, 8 January 1960.

Both at the time and later, proponents of Southside Schools continued to assert that the costs of operating the school system would not have fallen upon the black community. In 1961, Collins Denny, attorney for the Prince Edward School Board, told the Civil Rights Commission that like the PESF, Southside Schools would have been financed through tuition grants and private contributions.[205] Highly aware of the Foundation's ongoing struggle for solvency, which spiraled after the withdrawal of public monies in accordance to Lewis's order, blacks viewed these promises with skepticism. With an average income of less than half of that of their white neighbors, black residents could not afford to support a school system through private contributions. And given the sacrifices many whites found themselves forced to make to pay their Foundation bills, blacks considered substantial financial support from the white community unlikely. They also recognized that the white track record in the public schools evidenced very little concern for providing equal educational experiences for blacks.

Furthermore, blacks deeply resented the high-handed way in which the very segregationists who orchestrated the closings now styled themselves the self-appointed benefactors of black children. In claiming the high ground of expressing concern for the children, those behind Southside Schools sought to appropriate for themselves the mantle of "responsible leadership" and further their characterization of those pressing the case as irresponsible, vindictive, and uncaring. The offer smacked of image-driven paternalistic charity rather than concern for justice. Tobacco farmer George Morton was singularly

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[205] Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," 25 February 1961, p. 88, NAACP Papers.

unimpressed with such *noblesse oblige*. "Why should I follow men," he asked, "who don't acknowledge Almighty God and the Supreme Court?"[206]

To add insult to injury, J. Barrye Wall and compatriots widely broadcast their convictions regarding black inferiority. John Wilson, manager of Farmville's radio station WFLO, told an AFSC staff member in 1962 that Wall's passion for states' rights constituted a cover-up for a deep racial prejudice. According to Wilson, the newspaperman often acknowledged in private that, "I don't want any of my family having to associate socially or in school with any of those dirty niggers." When northern businessman Carleton Putnam published *Race and Reason*, one of the period's most popular eugenicist works, Wall wrote an endorsement for the back cover. The book's argument that white association with the "lower African race" would eventually destroy western civilization sounded a clarion call for the preservation of the white race. Wall's praise of the book as "a master stroke...the most important single document yet published on the question," no doubt encouraged countless readers – particularly in Virginia – to accept Putnam's conclusion.[207]

When the Southside Schools deadline passed without the return of any more applications, Board members accused the NAACP of intimidating parents and threatening reprisals against any who enrolled their children in the schools. The charges were hazy, as Hargrove himself could not testify as to whether the alleged threats were

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[206] John I. Brooks, "Graduation at Farmville," *The Reporter*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (7 July 1960), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[207] William Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Carleton Putnam, *Race and Reason: A Yankee View* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1961).

"economic, social, or what not," and Farmville police chief Otto Overton declined to comment on whether any black residents had reported incidents of intimidation. Virginia State Conference officials vehemently denied these reports, admitting that the NAACP had certainly encouraged parents to reject the offer as a segregationist scheme but disavowing any attempt at coercion. Oliver Hill turned the charges around, noting that, "to the contrary, information reaching us has been that various employers have been putting pressure on [their] employees and tenant farmers to send their children to the school."[208]

In their inability to envision any reasons other than indifference or intimidation for the lack of response, the Southside School organizers revealed the true depth of the divide between white and black in Prince Edward. Despite their assertions to the contrary, whites did not "know their Negroes." They possessed little understanding of the dynamics of influence in the community or of the true depth of opposition to Jim Crow. They continued to regard black "leaders" as those most friendly to white interests rather than those who enjoyed the most support within their community. Like most Prince Edward whites, they knew little to nothing about PECCA and its members. Clinging to the conviction that the desegregation crusade had been forced upon local blacks by NAACP agitators, they simply refused to believe that their black neighbors had strategically chosen to make tremendous sacrifices in the present in hopes of toppling Jim Crow for future generations.[209]

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[208] Bill Cheshire, "Threats of Reprisals Charged in Farmville," *Richmond News Leader*, 11 January 1960.

[209] Hartzler and Bagwell, Memo to Fairfax, 8 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Rebuffing such an offer from powerful white leaders produced long-term consequences. The boycott of Southside Schools engendered deep bitterness in the white community, which largely interpreted the refusal as a gesture of hostility. From Harry Byrd's speeches in the U.S. Senate to Barrye Wall's editorials in the *Herald*, whites repeated the same message: in rejecting the offer, blacks once again proved their laziness and indifference, in short, their innate inferiority. Harry Byrd put it this way:

> When it became apparent that the Negroes would not take the lead in behalf of their own children, the white people of the county chartered Southside Schools, Inc...the white people of the county are still ready and eager to help, but the fact remains that the NAACP, which precipitated the problem in the first place, is still keeping 1700 Negro children in Prince Edward County out of school.

In Farmville for a ceremony commemorating *Brown*, Roy Wilkins heatedly refuted this claim. Reminding Byrd that "it is not the NAACP that decided to abolish the public school system of this county," he laid the blame squarely in the laps of Virginia's political leaders:

> Today the Byrd policies have brought head-high Virginia to the low place of nailing up schoolhouses against little black children in defiance of that Court and that Constitution which are the creations in part of a Commonwealth that- thank God- knew not Harry Flood Byrd.[210]

Barrye Wall lashed out at media coverage that portrayed the county in a negative light, maintaining that "Southside Schools, Inc. stands ready to provide educational opportunities, but the NAACP chooses not to accept any assistance nor to offer any assistance to the people they represent and control." As late as the 1990's, these ideas remained prevalent amongst the older generation of whites. When interviewed in 1992,

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[210] Harry F. Byrd, "In Defense of Prince Edward County, Virginia," AFSC Archives; Press Release, "NAACP Didn't Close Virginia Schools, Says Wilkins," 26 May 1961, NAACP Papers, Part 3, Series D, Reel 9.

lifelong residents Leslie and Verdella Hamilton still insisted that blacks "could go to school if they had wanted to," "they were willing to sacrifice themselves for this," they brought it on themselves," and "we would have educated them, they wouldn't come – it was their choice not to go."[211]

Despite the deep conviction that accompanied the decision, it nonetheless haunted many black parents. Back in '59, Oliver Hill, in an attempt to lift spirits at a Christmas party for the children, promised that in rejecting the Southside Schools offer, "all you will lose will be one or two years of Jim Crow education." Framing the closing as an opportunity, he insisted that, "at the same time, in your leisure, you can gather more in basic education than you would get in five years of Jim Crow schools." Parents fretted as two years stretched to four and economic necessity intervened, forcing those students old enough to work to spend their school days earning a paycheck rather than studying at home. They suffered as they saw their younger children, given the shortage of educated adults, newspapers, magazines, books, and cultural activities in the county, fall into filling their empty hours with television rather than intellectual stimulation. Two months after the public schools reopened in 1964, Griffin himself thus expressed his struggle with his conscience:

> For five years our community was without any public schools, and because of this a generation of our children are permanently crippled and disabled educationally. For years, we have suffered the ways of peace and sought from the law the justice we have been denied so long. We suffered our children to be destroyed in order that the law might speak.[212]

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[211] J. Barrye Wall, "Prince Edward Under Attack," *Farmville Herald*, 2 December 1960; Verdella and Leslie Hamilton, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 4 October 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[212] Griffin to William vanden Heuval, 25 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38573, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

As a father who bore much of the responsibility for raising his young children due to his wife's chronic ill health, L.F. Griffin was well-positioned to understand both the plight of the children and the frustration and guilt of the parents who looked to him to provide decisive leadership. Often described as a man who "has a real sense of responsibility for the total community," Griffin was a dynamic leader who commanded the respect of the vast majority of the black community. Raised in Farmville, he returned to the county in 1949 to take over his father's pastorate at First Baptist Church. A devotee of the social gospel and protégé of the militant Rev. Vernon Johns, a Prince Edward native, Griffin later noted that "too many people do no more than pray and expect the world to change. I didn't and don't think that a church is meant to be housed inside a building. Everything about life is a legitimate concern of my religion."[213]

Searching for a life broader than that offered by a rural southern community, Griffin left Farmville as a young man to ride the rails to the West Coast and hitchhike back. Following his wanderlust, he went to New York to work as a shipping clerk, tried a stint as a department store handyman in Charlotte, North Carolina, spent some time on a fishing boat off the Florida coast, and learned to fly a plane before enlisting in the 758th Tank Battalion - the first black tank corps. Upon his discharge from the service, he enrolled at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, one of the nation's leading black institutions, to study for the ministry. Even as a divinity student, his concern for blending religious devotion with activism affected his priorities and affiliations. Imbued with social gospel-inspired progressivism, he worked for Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential

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[213] Fairfax to Moffett, "Visit to Prince Edward County, Virginia," 11 February 1960, NAACP Papers; Kluger, p. 463.

campaign and joined the NAACP. In returning to Farmville, he brought with him high hopes of nurturing a more progressive spirit among local blacks and building a community organization that would turn them into a political force. Looking back, he recalled, "I knew this county definitely needed some leadership...I cannot truthfully say that I envisaged what happened, but there were definite inclinations on my part to change the social patterns."[214]

Griffin was a voracious reader, known for his keen insights and "reconciling spirit." His children estimated his personal library at some three thousand volumes, fondly remembering a house so filled with books that "sometimes there wasn't a place for us to sit down." Acquainted with almost everyone in the county, he was a shrewd observer who generally knew where people (black and white alike) stood on the schools issue and what role they might play in the crusade to reopen them. He was a larger-than-life figure to many of the children, who remember him as a man of strong convictions, "a man that stood up for right," but who nonetheless made time to speak with them personally, listen to their problems, and provide helpful advice in response. Teenagers were his particular concern, and in the years after the reopening he spent a great deal of time encouraging the older ones not to give up on finishing high school. Gary Smith, who grew up in First Baptist, affectionately remembers that as a shy child he used to leave questions for his pastor, such as "Was Jesus white or black?" on the pulpit and always received a serious and thoughtful answer in return.[215]

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[214] Kluger, p. 462-463; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 3-13.

[215] Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Gary Smith, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 24 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Edward Morton, interview

Edward Morton considered L.F. Griffin a hero, a jolly, grey-haired man whose sincerity and wise counsel helped prevent an outbreak of physical violence in the county. He understood the anger and bitterness that filled the atmosphere yet nonetheless counseled the young people to respond peaceably, repeating over and over that "doing something to someone is not going to help." Morton found him both accessible and awe-inspiring. Looking back from the vantage point of middle age, he reflected:

> I think Rev. Griffin was my Martin Luther King....I heard about Martin Luther King, but I knew this man and I met this man and he said, "Well, there's always a right way to do something and you have to do it. And you'll get smacked down sometimes. Being smacked down is not going to kill you, you get back up and try it again."[216]

Also terming Griffin "Virginia's Martin Luther King," Ed Peeples remembered the minister for his vibrant intellect, his gentle manner, and his compelling smile. "A white supremacist wouldn't go away [from him] feeling inferior," he commented, "but he would somehow suspect that this man was superior." Armstead "Chuck" Reid, who remained in the county throughout the closings, forged a strong relationship with Griffin later in life. After panicking and rejecting a college scholarship out of fear that he would not be able to handle college courses, he served a stint in the armed forces before returning to Farmville. Observing the minister at work inspired him to throw himself into local politics in order to make a difference in the lives of the town's African American

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by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 25 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Ken Woodley, "Rev. Griffin Is Honored," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004.

[216] Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 6-7.

residents. Elected to the Farmville Town Council in 1986, Reid became one of the county's first black officials, a development he attributed largely to Griffin's influence.[217]

Most black residents shared Morton and Reid's esteem for the minister. As with Martin Luther King, Jr., they did not always subscribe to his social gospel progressivism or comprehend his frequent allusions to philosophers and liberal theologians, but they nonetheless admired his prodigious intelligence. Though his neighbors at times ran from his constant prodding to take action, they overwhelmingly respected the fearlessness and stark honesty that characterized his interactions with local whites. Observers quickly recognized that Griffin "was not a country preacher." He belonged the generation of civil rights leaders John Dittmer has characterized as typically male, middle class, marginally free from white economic control, frequently veterans, and generally associated with the NAACP. Griffin's contemporaries included individuals such as Lester Banks, Medgar Evers, Amzie Moore, and Aaron Henry. After their first meeting, Jean Fairfax noted that, "he is a man with far broader interests and deeper insights than I had been prepared to find...he is eager for ideas." As the crisis catapulted him onto a larger stage, individuals inside and outside the county began to laud him as more than simply a competent local leader.[218]

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[217] Armstead "Chuck" Reid, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 19 August 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[218] Jean Fairfax, Memo to Barbara Moffett, 11 February 1960, NAACP Papers, Part 24: Special Subjects, 1956-1965, Series B: Foreign Affairs – Leagues and Organizations, Reel 27; R. C. Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 8-12; Carl Rowan, "Negroes, Too, Turn on Minister Who Urged Integration," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 January 1956; John Dittmer, "The Politics of the Mississippi Movement, 1954-1964," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986): 65-93; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 7.

While maintaining leadership of the day to day fight in the county, he traveled a great deal, speaking about the situation in the county and serving the NAACP in a variety of ways. His intelligence, eloquence, ability to inspire others to action, and gift for strategy soon made him one of the state's leading civil rights figures, precipitating his October 1962 election as President of the Virginia State Conference of Branches. The new role further increased his out-of-county responsibilities, as he attempted to balance crusading for the children of Prince Edward County with charting the NAACP's statewide program. Some activists resented the increased demands on his time and his inability to attend to detail work within the county, but others recognized that Griffin's abilities and vision marked him for a stage larger than Prince Edward. His diverse responsibilities spread him thin, and as R.C. Smith noted:

> He was trying to be the official "martyr" that one NAACP spokesman made of him – the "giant" that Dr. King saw – and still transact the business of the resistance movement in the community. He was away on speaking engagements as much as at home, and if he devoted more time and effort to the work he enjoyed – the speaking and counseling – than to the bare bones organizational work, he merely reflected the NAACP view that the county must be kept a national issue.[219]

Most whites did not share their black neighbors' esteem for the First Baptist minister. Rev. Otis McClung of Farmville Baptist Church insisted that the NAACP selected Prince Edward for a school suit only after blacks in every other county in the area refused to cooperate, and that Griffin himself spent his days playing poker and living on insurance rake-offs. Virginia Extension Services ordered its black agricultural extension workers in the county to avoid him. The Southside Schools Board of Directors

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[219] "Action Program for the State of Virginia," June 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 19; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 205.

considered him unreasonable, irresponsible. and irrelevant. Some blacks alleged that white merchants and creditors attempted to break Griffin through economic coercion, cutting off his credit and demanding cash payments for any goods sold or services rendered. Others, black and white alike, countered that the minister was a poor credit risk whom white merchants refused to lend any extra courtesies throughout the crisis years.[220]

Either way, the mid-1950's tried the Griffin family's patience and determination. A minority of the First Baptist congregation, including some members of the Board of Deacons, deeply resented their minister's civil rights work. The bank repossessed the family car and the Griffin children sometimes went without adequate clothing and food due to local merchants' "cash only" policy toward their father. Throughout the winter of 1955, the lack of ready cash available to purchase oil resulted in long stretches without heat in the family home. For extra money, Griffin assumed pastoral responsibility for two country churches in neighboring Cumberland County. Custom dictated that these congregations paid their minister on the day he preached, and Griffin often rushed home on Sunday afternoons to buy groceries. A clumsy homemade bomb fizzled out on the family's doorstep and vandals once attempted to start a fire in the yard.[221]

The family received a few threatening phone calls, including one that threatened the minister with death if he came near the Confederate monument on High Street. When word of this particular warning spread around the congregation, a few members of the

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[220] Irene Osborne, Memo to Moffett and Fairfax, 4 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 133-135; Carl Rowan, "Negroes, Too, Turn on Minister Who Urged Integration," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 January 1956.

[221] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 135-137; Carl Rowan, "Negroes, Too, Turn on Minister Who Urged Integration," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 January 1956.

congregation came by the parsonage to drop off shotgun shells. In an effort to quell the fear sparked by the threat, Griffin, sans shells, deliberately strolled past the monument and returned home unmolested. Deeply discouraged by some blacks' acquiescence in the white campaign to silence him, he told black reporter Carl Rowan in 1956 that, "My people mean well. They mean well. It's just that they've been kept down for so long." He considered leaving Farmville, but as he later told R.C. Smith, "I wanted to show that it wasn't my intention to lead folks into trouble and then leave them." In time, due largely to a salary from the Virginia State Conference NAACP for his work as county project coordinator, the family's economic situation improved. Nevertheless, each member – including the children – sacrificed in order to continue the fight in Prince Edward.[222]

With the well-respected minister at the helm, PECCA generated significant support from the black community. For some time, it possessed no real office, no typewrite and no platform for the press. Yet despite being solely reliant upon mimeographed fliers for communication with the public, the organization still managed to unify its constituency. The weekly Wednesday evening mass meetings attracted high numbers for such a rural area, averaging seventy-five to two hundred attendees. Akin to those connected with the SCLC, PECCA meetings began with a period of prayer and singing and addressed the injustices of local government in a determined, realistic, yet consciously non-vindictive tone. The community solidarity and space for resistance generated by PECCA unnerved leading whites, who attempted, relatively unsuccessfully, to plant informants at the Wednesday meetings. For instance, Gary Smith's father's

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[222] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 133-135; Carl Rowan, "Negroes, Too, Turn on Minister Who Urged Integration," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune,* 4 January 1956.

automobile trim shop suffered a decline in white patronage in the wake of his refusal to report back to the white leadership on the content of the mass meetings.[223]

PECCA's early focus upon voter registration proved relatively successful. At the dawn of the campaign, only 500 of the county's 3400 black adults possessed the status of registered voters. Upon learning that 128 blacks completed the registration process within a period of only two days, local Defenders retaliated by organizing a white "get out to the polls" effort. State President Robert Crawford encouraged a statewide adoption of this strategy, noting in the organization's newsletter that, "We feel sure that your county Negroes have also been working on their voters, and your people should be alerted to this immediately. This is important." PECCA efforts continued throughout the winter of 1960. Lines outside the registrar's office became a regular sight on Monday mornings as approximately twenty-five new black voters paid their poll taxes and registered to vote each week. By spring, registrar J.H. Allen's rolls included 1200 African Americans, more than double the amount registered the previous year. The registration push increased the black vote to a little over one-fifth of the county electorate.[224]

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[223] Paul Rilling to Fairfax, 2 September 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38118, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Baker to Fairfax, "PECCA Meetings," 22 November 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38128, ibid; Transcript, Gary Smith interview, 24 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[224] Fairfax to Moffett, Rilling, and Bennett, "Crisis in Prince Edward County, VA Conference," 18 January 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Robert Crawford to Officers, Prince Edward County Chapter, Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, 22 October 1959, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, Box 2, "Notebook Material on Desegregation, 1957-1959" Folder, UVA; "White Voters Respond," *The Defender: A Publication of the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties*, 1960, UVA.

When PECCA issued a call for assistance in developing a comprehensive educational program for the approximately 1600 children who remained in the county, some twenty national organizations concerned with racial politics in the South responded. Local and state leaders took several lessons away from the Southside Schools controversy, most importantly the immediacy of the need to provide some sort of relief for the children and the necessity of disproving white propaganda by providing a temporary educational program that would prove consistent with the lawsuit. Virginia State Conference officials noted privately that in the face of involvement on part of these other organizations, the NAACP must "retain the initiative in effecting whatever remedial techniques that might be subsequently agreed upon."[225]

At the second of these meetings, State Conference officials presented a proposal for a group of ten training centers to be established in every region of the county to provide study-play group environments for the children. Ever concerned about safeguarding the legal proceedings, Oliver Hill encouraged the gathered representatives to "devote themselves to morale-building and remedial work for the children and leave the strategy in the hands of the NAACP." As long as the centers remained socialization-focused study groups and made no pretensions toward serving as real schools, he considered them consistent with the court case. Nonetheless, Hill cautioned those interested in orchestrating political pressure not to act without first clearing their plans with the legal staff. Participating organizations accepted the proposal, elected PECCA to supervise the project, and appointed the American Friends Service Committee as the lead

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[225] Banks to Wilkins, 11 January 1960, NAACP Papers, Part 27: Selected Branch Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 19; Griffin, Preface to Carlene Bumbrey Wooden's "Report and Overview of Prince Edward County Training Centers," n.d., NAACP Papers, Part 27, Reel 19.

national liaison. Fundamentally in agreement with the assumption that ultimate resolution of the situation would be achieved through the workings of the legal system rather than in the halls of Congress or the streets of Farmville, partnering organizations easily accepted the State Conference's vision for the project.[226]

Operation 1700, as the project came to be called (in reference to the 1700 black children robbed of an education) can be accurately described, at least in theory, as an early manifestation of the politically charged educational philosophy that later produced the freedom schools of 1964 and 1965. A "holding action to keep together students and parents and to inspire and support them in their efforts to obtain first class schooling," the training centers more closely resembled community/recreational centers than traditional schools. In fact, no one but the Foundation's Roy Pearson ever referred to them as "schools." Focused on citizenship training, exploring current events, and building race pride and habits of good health, the centers emphasized practical education and attracted between 600-650 children. One to two supervisors, the majority of whom were female high school graduates or women with some experience in working with children, oversaw operations at each center. Most of the supervisors were parents, all were local residents and all were black.[227]

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[226] Virginia State Conference, NAACP, "A Proposal for Temporary and Remedial Relief for the Out-of-School Negro Youth of Prince Edward County," NAACP Papers, Part 27: Selected Branch Files, 1956-1965, Series A: The South, Reel 19; Griffin, Preface to "Report and Overview of Prince Edward County Training Centers," n.d., NAACP Papers, Part 27, Reel 19; Fairfax to Moffett, Rilling and Bennett, "Crisis in Prince Edward County. VA Conference," 18 January 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 3.

[227] Carlene Bumbrey Wooden, "Report and Overview of Prince Edward County Training Centers," p. iv., n.d., NAACP Papers, Part 27, Reel 19; "Operation 1700 Special Report,"

Though the State Conference authored the formal proposal launching the program, Griffin and PECCA conducted the vast majority of the organizational and recruiting work. The first three centers opened in February 1960 at First Baptist Church (Farmville), Meherrin Community Center (Meherrin), and St. James A.M.E. Church (Prospect). A month later, five more opened their doors: the High Rock Center (High Rock Baptist Church), the Hampden-Sydney Center (Loving Sisters of Charity Hall, Mercy Seat Baptist Church), the Mt. Carmel Center (a former school building renovated into a community center), the New Bethel Center (New Bethel Baptist Church), and the Sulphur Springs/Five Forks Center, which met in the basement of Supervisor Flossie White's home. By the end of the term, having fifty-five children in her home every day left White slightly frazzled. "I was sorry when it closed down, but not *real* sorry," she ruefully told a reporter. Nevertheless, her determination remained undimmed, and she vowed that "if the schools don't open in September, I think I have enough stickability to stick it out." Two more centers got on their feet in early April in High Bridge (High Bridge Baptist Church) and Pamplin (a former Chicken Shack restaurant).[228]

The centers held classes five days a week from 10:00 AM to 1:30 PM into early summer. PECCA engaged Carlene Bumbrey Wooden, a member of the State Conference of Branches Executive Board, to write a suggested curriculum, which supervisors loosely adapted to fit the abilities and interests of the children under their care. Wooden

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p. 7-8, NAACP Papers; Adam Clymer, "New Private Schools Have Permanent Air," Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot*, 21 May 1961, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[228] "Operation 1700 Special Report," p. 7-8, NAACP Papers; Wooden, "Report and Overview of Prince Edward County Training Centers," p. 1-5, NAACP Papers; John I. Brooks, "Graduation at Farmville," *The Reporter*, (Vol. 7, No. 1), 7 July 1960, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

suggested a diverse program, ranging from extensive study of health, nutrition and hygiene to music appreciation to studying parliamentary procedure to learning to write invitations and business letters. She also emphasized traditional academic subjects such as reading, arithmetic, social studies and science, proposing activities that used everyday materials rather than textbooks, i.e. teaching reading with magazines and newspapers, science through intensive nature study, and social studies through class elections and the study of current events.[229]

In practice, the activities most often chosen for use by supervisors included arts and crafts and constructing play-life situations such as stores and banks. The play-life situations aimed at teaching children practical life skills such as basic arithmetic and fractions, recordkeeping, opening and maintaining a bank account, and planning a budget. The study of black history also received significant emphasis, serving as the basis for lessons in reading, history, composition writing, music and literature. Some supervisors drew heavily upon the experiences of blacks in America and the crusade for civil rights for citizenship education projects; while other used sports and games to help teach cooperation and serve as outlets for restless energy.[230]

Prior to the formalization of the training centers, the majority of children who received any instruction at all worked at home with their own parents. However, several women in the community did operate study groups in their homes open to any children in

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[229] "Operation 1700 Special Report," p. 7, NAACP Papers; Wooden, "Report and Overview of Prince Edward County Training Centers," p. vi-x, NAACP Papers.

[230] "Operation 1700 Special Report," p. 7, NAACP Papers; Fairfax to Moffett, Hartzler and Baker, 16 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38127, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

the neighborhood interested in attending. In at least one case, a ninth grader who amassed a small library ran a "kitchen school," spending her mornings instructing her younger sister and another little girl. Though these study groups reached only a small percentage of students, they played an important role. Some of the younger children who attended learned to read and write through the efforts of these women. Furthermore, in taking on the role of instructor, at least two of the organizers put their considerable influence in the county to good use. Flossie White and Mildred Patterson, active community and church leaders who played leading roles in the Prince Edward NAACP chapter, inspired their neighbors to join the struggle by taking on the role of tutors. After the organization of the training centers, both stepped forward to become supervisors.[231]

The most well-educated supervisor was Julia Anderson at the Hampden-Sydney Center. A veteran teacher in the Prince Edward public schools, she held a M.Ed. from Virginia State College (now Virginia State University). Having elected to remain in the county when the schools closed, she was a natural candidate for a position as supervisor. At least four of her colleagues were college graduates who possessed extensive teaching experience. Elizabeth Watkins (Prospect Center), also an alumnus of Virginia State, served many years in the county schools. Samuel Ewell (High Rock Center) graduated from West Virginia State University and served for a time as a high school principal. Alberta Sims (Pamplin Center), a graduate of Bluefield State College, taught outside the county. In addition to her duties at the center, she also served as recording secretary of the Prince Edward County Christian Association. Ethel Wilson (Farmville Center), who earned her B.S. in Elementary Education at Hampton Institute, taught at Mary E. Branch

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[231] "Operation 1700 Special Report," p. 9, NAACP Papers; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

Elementary School in Farmville when the schools closed. As the organist at Race Street Baptist Church, she commanded respect from her neighbors.[232]

Alease Baker (New Bethel Center) completed two years of college at Virginia State and served the county schools as a substitute teacher. Lucretia Fears (Meherrin Center) spent two years at St. Paul's College and taught in the public school system for a number of years. Fears also managed a profitable egg business that boasted some of the top layers in the county. Josephine Thompson (High Bridge Center) was a fashion designer rather than an educator, but her experiences as a student at New York City's Pratt Institute no doubt enabled her to open the children's eyes to new educational and career opportunities for black people. Thompson later became an outspoken leader in the interracial Citizens for Public Education group. Mildred Patterson (Mt. Carmel Center) and Flossie White (Sulphur Springs/Five Forks Center) were high school graduates whose educational status and prominent roles in the NAACP and the church made them community leaders. Secretary of the local chapter Flossie White also worked as a beauty culturist.[233]

The assistant supervisors possessed similar biographies. Beatrice Davenport at Prospect studied at Virginia State and taught in the public schools for twenty-nine years. John Fears (Meherrin), a graduate of Virginia State, was a respected community leader. Cora Hill (Hampden-Sydney) and Althea Jones (Sulphur Springs/Five Forks) were also trained teachers who possessed years of experience in the local school system. A neighbor described Jones as "a religious and civic minded woman whose services for the

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[232] "Operation 1700 Special Report," p. 8-10, NAACP Papers.

[233] Ibid.

community cannot be measured." Cula Berryman (Pamplin), Josephine Early (New Bethel), and Rosa Palmer (High Bridge) shared status as high school graduates.[234]

In an effort to strengthen community solidarity and keep parents involved, leaders designated many of the weekly PECCA meetings "Parents' Nights." On these nights, center students presented programs they had practiced and prepared during their daily sessions. Presentations included skits, music, poetry reading, and art exhibitions. Many of the older youth offered opinions in the "political" portions of the meetings as well. AFSC Community Relations Director Helen Baker found herself particularly impressed by a group that pressed for a discussion of the factors of causation behind the closings and volunteered an opinion that much of the responsibility rested on black adults who failed to seek and exercise the franchise.[235]

Despite the fundraising efforts of the National Council of Negro Women and the American Friends Service Committee, PECCA's finances remained perpetually unstable, ensuring that continuing operation of the centers remained primarily dependent on NAACP support and a spirit of volunteerism. The project budget called for salaries of $500 for each of the supervisors, $750 for Griffin as Project Coordinator, and $350 for fuel to heat the buildings, but these figures rarely materialized. Parents contributed to keeping the buildings warm by splitting kindling at home and sending it with their children. The second "year" of classes ran for over a month and a half before supervisors received any salary payments or funds for supplies and fuel. Despite their pinched

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[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid, p. 7; Baker to Family, 19 May 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU.

wallets, they attempted to make Christmas special by hosting punch and cookie parties for the children at their own expense.[236]

The combination of passing time and severe budget constraints ensured that many of the teachers who filled supervisory posts the first time around had left the county to pursue steady paying jobs elsewhere by the time the centers reopened in November 1960 for another session. By the end of 1959, the state's professional association of black teachers, the Virginia Teachers Association (VTA), helped fifty of the county's sixty-seven black teachers find positions outside the county. By November 1960, the majority of the remaining seventeen departed as well. The quality of instruction suffered as sincerely dedicated but relatively untrained women filled the supervisors' posts. The expansion from ten centers to sixteen increased geographical accessibility, but as Baker noted, "They are located in such inadequate and dilapidated quarters that little more is possible in them than a scant program of reading, singing, and discussion." Fund-raising problems persisted and PECCA ended the year with a deficit, unable to complete salary payments to the supervisors.[237]

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[236] Banks, Robertson, and Henderson, "1700 Negro Boys and Girls of Prince Edward Co. Appeal to You," NAACP Papers; Virginia State Conference, NAACP, "A Proposal for Temporary and Remedial Relief for the Out-of-School Negro Youth of Prince Edward County," NAACP Papers; Fairfax to Moffett, Hartzler and Baker, 16 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38127, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Baker to Fairfax, 17 December 1960, ibid.

[237] AFSC Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, 9 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid; Agenda, Consultation on Emergency Educational Services for Displaced Pupils, 19 December 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38116, ibid; Helen Baker, "The Prince Edward County Story," 15 February 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid; Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report, August 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38165, ibid.

The effort expended during the two years of operation was monumental. Yet although partially successful as a stop-gap measure for the younger children, the training centers proved simply incapable of meeting the needs of hundreds of older students. As Helen Baker once observed, "the things which seem to be going on seem to be so dull for anyone above fourth grade." Even among the younger children, not all chose to attend. Those who came seeking a traditional school left disappointed. 600-650 children attended regularly. Black enrollment in grades 1-6 in the public schools for 1959-1960, however, was to have been 1264. Even subtracting the 200 students estimated to be attending schools outside the county in 1960 (many of whom were actually high schoolers), over 300 children's families chose not to make use of the centers. In John Hurt's recollection, dedication to the training centers was weak. With a widowed mother and a large family to support, Hurt's labor in the fields, even at age seven, was valuable enough to prevent him from taking advantage of the opportunities they offered. Other families may well have found themselves in similar situations, dependent upon their children's labor or simply unable to provide transportation due to their own work schedules.[238]

Raising money for Prince Edward County posed a particularly difficult challenge for those responsible for collecting funds. The absence of nationally recognized leaders and shocking photographic images of violence in the streets mitigated against high levels of donations from private individuals. Other civil rights focused on supporting their own programs, while the majority of major national foundations, even more liberal ones, put

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[238] Baker to Fairfax, 17 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38127, ibid; "Operation 1700 Special Report," p. 6-7, NAACP Papers; Transcript, John Hurt interview, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

little money into civil rights before the large-scale desegregation crises of 1962 and 1963. Even those that did support the movement held back from investing in "that mess," as they characterized the situation in Prince Edward.[239]

When it came to leadership, Prince Edward County possessed low numbers of the ministers and teachers who played such important roles in many other southern black communities. Few area clergymen served full-time or received any formal training for the ministry. Most of the teachers departed within a year of the decision to close the schools. This void in traditional leadership heightened the significance of the individuals who stepped forward into leadership roles in PECCA. Many were new to political activism. While teaching in the training centers or coordinating programs at the Community Center might seem like apolitical work, in the context of the situation in the county, such actions breathed of solidarity and resistance. As these new movement activists concentrated on serving the community, the American Friends Service Committee focused on investing in their potential and providing an administrative support network for PECCA.[240]

Friendly Assistance: The AFSC Comes to Farmville

The AFSC's involvement in Prince Edward County effectively began with the Southern Interagency Conference's Fall 1959 meeting, at which time the group decided to focus its attentions upon communities with closed schools. Participant organizations

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[239] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 6-7.

[240] Fairfax to Moffett, "Visit to Prince Edward County, Virginia," 11 February 1960, NAACP Papers, Part 24, Series B. Reel 27; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 6.

asked the Friends to take the lead in Prince Edward and release a staff person to go "on site" to provide technical assistance to PECCA. Irene Osborne, a white sociologist and human relations worker with a background in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), duly entered the county in June 1960. Osborne's short-term assignment included scouting out the situation, strengthening contacts and assisting local leaders with a survey of the educational needs of the black community. Though Osborne herself grew up in Ohio, her economically disadvantaged parents hailed from the rural South. Though they clung to the racial views of their own youth, their daughter turned her first-hand experience of childhood poverty into a pronounced sensitivity toward injustice and a lifelong empathy for the disadvantaged.[241]

Though born out of a pronounced need to assemble the kind of specific information necessary to effectively plan a remedial program, the survey also served as a calculated attempt to boost morale in the black community and increase pressure on the federal government to intervene. Carried out by students from Hampton Institute and Virginia Union University, it revealed remarkable diversity of opinion on everything from race relations in the county to attitudes toward the NAACP to whether reopened segregated schools were preferable to no schools at all. It also pinpointed the numbers, revealing that out of 1750 school-age children, only 502 currently attended school. Out

[241] Fairfax, Memo to Moffett, 2 October 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38117, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Fairfax, Memo to Baker, 18 October 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38125, ibid; Lynn, p. 75.

of the 1248 not in school, 485 had never been in a classroom. 367 children resided outside the county at the time the numbers were recorded.[242]

Helen Baker, an African American human relations worker who served as Director of Literacy Programs at the Southern School for Workers before joining the AFSC in 1950, replaced Osborne in October as the first Community Relations Program director. She remained in the county until August 1961, at which time Harry Boyte took over the AFSC office. Baker, in Jean Fairfax's words, was "a real community organizer" who possessed a deep commitment to "helping people in a community who had gone through some kind of a crisis move from that crisis to healing and renewal and building something else." A cancer survivor who underwent at least five major operations and who suffered near-constant pain, Baker intimately understood affliction, yet remained committed to continuing on with life. A devout Quaker, she was known for her deep religious faith, warm personality, nurturing spirit, and engaging sense of humor. As said in her eulogy when cancer prematurely ended her life in 1967, "Her life was one great romance. She made it a glorious opportunity for seeing marvelous things all the time. And to these marvelous things, she gave herself with unrelenting courage."[243]

Although AFSC sympathies lay fully on the side of the black plaintiffs, the organization's commitment to peace-making and regeneration ensured a program that sought to create dialogue and reconciliation between the polarized black and white

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[242] John Morsell, Memo to Roy Wilkins, 18 March 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 3, Series D, Reel 10; "Prince Edward County NAACP School Children Survey," 1963, NAACP Papers, ibid.

[243] Untitled Biography of Helen Baker, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, VSU; Jean Fairfax interview, transcript, pg. 9; Obituary, newspaper clipping, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, VSU; J.M. Ellison, "Eulogy for Helen Estes Baker," ibid.

communities. As Baker told *Farmville Herald* reporter Ben Bowers, "You will find AFSC in areas of tension. Its presence in a spot is to relieve tension." In early 1960, the Southeastern Regional Office voiced some reservations regarding the long term effects of AFSC's close affiliation with PECCA. Noting that "AFSC should be working at the deeper level of rebuilding community relationships and goodwill," it questioned whether the training centers would advance reconciliation or just further polarize the community. Authors of the memo questioned whether, in supporting the training centers, AFSC risked forfeiting the opportunity to play a reconciling role by becoming primarily associated with one side of the struggle. This concern for acting at the deepest level never left AFSC staff members, though they threw themselves wholeheartedly into the day to day practical work of organizing programs and gathering information. It served as the primary motivating force behind the organization's tireless attempts to restore ties between the black and white communities and build an interracial pro-public education coalition.[244]

However, in the early months, they did choose to focus more upon supporting already existing programs. Sympathetic toward PECCA's inability to maintain a consistently staffed office, AFSC workers allowed the local organization free and regular usage of typewriters, telephones and mimeograph machines in their office in the Miller Building downtown Farmville. When PECCA agreed to sponsor the Virginia Christian Leadership Conference's January 1961 Pilgrimage for Public Schools, Baker lent her

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[244] Ben Bowers, "Quakers' Urgent Project Nears 1st Anniversary," *Farmville Herald*, 10 February 1961; Fairfax, Memo to Community Relations Committee and the American Section Executive Committee, 2 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

support to the effort and opened the AFSC office as headquarters for all local meetings relating to the event.[245]

She also publicized the phone number and address of the AFSC office as a contact point for groups interested in sending supplies or operating short-term remedial educational programs in the county, as well as a place to reach PECCA leaders. In the event of inclement weather, parents called the AFSC office to check on the Centers' operational status. The connections between PECCA and AFSC were so close that the organization often received PECCA's bills. AFSC staffers also used their extensive contacts to procure available office equipment and arrange for its donation to PECCA. After the January 1961 publication of Baker's article, "The Prince Edward Story," in the *Washington Post* and *Newsday: The Long Island Newspaper*, in cooperation with the Virginia Human Relations Council, donations poured in. As PECCA lacked drop-off or storage facilities, the AFSC office overflowed with donated books, desks, and other supplies, courtesy of shipments that regularly arrived in the middle of the night. Baker distributed the donated materials through the Leadership Institute until PECCA's office opened in February and part-time secretary Dorothy Croner took over the responsibility.[246]

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[245] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, pg. 6; Baker to Robert Robertson, President, Virginia State Conference NAACP, Lester Banks, Leslie Griffin, Jean Fairfax and Wil Hartzler, 22 February 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[246] Fairfax to Rilling, 10 September 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38118, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Baker to Family, 25 January 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; Baker to Family, 6 February 1961, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 5 January 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; AFSC

Much as she appreciated these donations, Helen Baker sometimes wondered whether those so moved by the children's plight were as concerned about racial equality and economic justice within their own communities. Noting that some of the most generous donations came from a Long Island community that had recently fought tooth and nail to keep blacks out of its housing projects, she reflected:

> I only hope that people see that this problem is of the same piece of fabric as housing discrimination in Long Island, or job discrimination in Oregon. Prince Edward is not something apart…it can happen there…anywhere where men have wrong ideas about human decency or where minority groups do not wake up to their civic responsibility for what happens.[247]

Though PECCA's haphazard finances and extreme decentralization never entirely ceased to worry AFSC staff members, they remained ever conscious, in the words of Jean Fairfax, "that a voluntary civil rights organization with no money, with no paid leadership, and burdened with enormous choices should not be harshly judged." In the spirit of capacity building, they respected local leaders and community strategies and limited themselves to providing assistance when requested rather than usurping the role of decision-maker. Years later, Fairfax noted that some other national organizations' tendency to enter local communities, take on the mantle of leadership and then wonder what happened to the local leaders, distressed AFSC staff members throughout the movement years.[248]

Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, 9 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid.

[247] Baker to Family, 25 January 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; Helen Baker, Notes for Address at Gillfield Baptist Church, 14 May 1961, ibid.

[248] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, pg. 6.

Baker threw herself into forging links with other progressive organizations possessing the capacity to lend assistance in various ways, including the Richmond Unitarian Church, the Richmond office of the Anti-Defamation League, the United Church Women, the Virginia Teachers' Association, the Richmond Committee of Volunteers to Prince Edward, and the Virginia Council on Human Relations. The effort to encourage communication about the crisis took both formal and informal directions. AFSC partnered with the National Student Association to sponsor a one-day seminar for Virginia college students on "Education, States' Rights, and Democracy." Students from ten institutions, including Longwood and Hampden-Sydney, heard a keynote address, visited the training centers, and participated in a discussion with local black leaders, thus opening up new avenues for local white students to explore their relationship to the situation.[249]

At a more grassroots level, Baker encouraged the growing community tendency to use the AFSC office as a place to drop in for informal chats. Noting that "teenagers probably make more use of our office than any other group in the community in simply coming in to talk and discuss their problems," she set up a reading and game room in the empty space next door to make them feel welcome. Black adults, white moderates and egalitarians, and distressed Longwood and Hampden-Sydney students came frequently as well, eager for advice and a listening ear. The twenty-four hour nature of the job once

[249] AFSC Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, 9 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Agenda for Virginia Student Human Relations Seminar, "Education, States' Rights and Democracy," 18 February 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38167, ibid.

led Baker to exclaim that "this has been one of those night and day weeks when I have not succeeded in keeping Prince Edward County out of my bed at night."[250]

She also put her contacts to use in organizing "carload conferences," small group encounters that brought together two local black women and two interested white women from outside the county. Accompanied by Baker, participants took a driving tour of Prince Edward, stopping at the school and training center facilities, and shared dinner together. Conversation naturally spread to topics beyond the school situation and Baker rejoiced in the fact that the carload conferences provided many of these women their first opportunity for informal association with individuals of a different racial background. A typical week for Baker in February 1961 included two speaking engagements (one at an NAACP meeting in Cullen and the other before the Martha E. Forrester Club, a black women's organization in Farmville) and a student conference. She also met with a white Hampden-Sydney professor and members of the Virginia Teachers' Association, and shared a dinner with a white Unitarian family from Richmond and a black family from Prince Edward with similarly aged children.[251]

Despite her fragile health, she genuinely enjoyed the teenagers and easily earned their love in return. After noting their astonished response to their experiences hosting a group of ninth graders from the integrated Georgetown Day School at one of the Centers for a day in April ("those white children were so nice!"), she arranged a follow-up visit.

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[250] AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report, August 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38173, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 15 March 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid.

[251] AFSC Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, 9 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid; Baker to Robertson, Banks, Griffin, Fairfax and Hartzler, 22 February 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid.

Determined to provide the children with positive interracial experiences, she sent a group to Washington, DC to spend two days as guests of the Day School students. The visit culminated in a major league baseball game and a picnic in an integrated park, and the teenagers returned to Prince Edward overjoyed. As Ruth Feldstein points out in *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in America, 1930-1965*, the political climate of the early 1960's encouraged the organizing of children (deemed women's work) into an activist force. In tune with rising student protests and increasing calls for more direct action to achieve civil rights gains, Baker applied her insights as a woman and mother to broadening Prince Edward teenagers' horizons and developing their political consciousness. [252]

Baker was a profoundly thoughtful woman whose reflections were as active as her days. Asked to speak at Wyatt T. Walker's Gillfield Baptist Church in May 1961, she took her theme "loving our neighbor" from the week's headline news story, the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. In terms that brought the issue uncomfortably close to home, she challenged her listeners to consider the real meaning of "doing good to them that despitefully use me," suggesting:

> The tales of horror of Prince Edward County do not match those of the Jewish survivors at Tel Aviv, but the broken hearts and homes, Negro and white, the displaced people, the loss of human resources, the scars on children's lives, the mental diseases of prejudice and distrust and fear and hate we can never measure....How can we apply our Christian principle of loving one's neighbor in this situation? This is not a man in far off Israel, but the man at the corner drug store, on the local school board or police force, men who represent the power structure in our communities.... How can we love these men? These are people among whom we must move and the character of our own lives will be reflected

[252] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 20 April 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 20 June 1961, ibid.

in the relationship which we set up between these men - our enemies - and ourselves.[253]

She went on to suggest an answer, characterizing the heart of her job in Prince Edward County as "taking the first awkward steps" toward breaking down hostility between black and white. In Baker's eyes, a militant campaign against inequality and segregation does not and should not preclude the sort of compassion and human kindness that can transform relationships. Never one to use empty words, she practiced what she preached. When hearing of a death, illness or difficulty in the family of an acquaintance (the postmaster, the service station owner, the paper boy), she always sent a note of sympathy or encouragement. As she told her audience, "These letters go to any family which is having trouble – Negro and white." She reached out to segregationists on the basis of a common humanity. For Baker, sincere condolences, daily pleasantries, and ongoing attempts to build interracial coalitions and personal relationships provided an answer to the question of "how can we in our tragedy act in such a way as not to allow the hatred which is all about us to consume us and become a part of ourselves?"[254]

From her first days in the county, Baker found herself particularly drawn to the women teaching in the training centers. As a mother and a former educator, she strongly identified with their struggles and convictions. She also sensed that they provided a niche for the AFSC, an opportunity for the organization to enrich their work with the children and invest in them as community leaders. Unlike the majority of their

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[253] Notes for address at Gillfield Baptist Church, 14 May 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU.

[254] Ibid.

predecessors the previous year, few of the Fall 1960 training center supervisors possessed college educations or any formal teaching experience. Yet out of desire to help the children and serve the community, they volunteered for leadership positions. Baker considered them the very sort of people who could most benefit from AFSC's interest in broadening local leaders' horizons. By December 1960, she established a Leadership Institute for Center supervisors, which met monthly to discuss issues relating to teaching, citizenship, and race relations and to enjoy special cultural activities.

As might be expected, the Institute's first meeting dealt with practical concerns. Baker resurrected Wooden's report, seemingly lost in transition between the first "year" of operations and the second, and the group sketched out a general curriculum plan. Participants reviewed a selection of inexpensive educational materials and decided that the "My Weekly Reader" serials, new every week, would best hold the children's attention. AFSC paid the first month's subscription and parents took up a collection to cover the remainder of the costs. Subsequent Institute meetings provided more diverse content. In February, the group read aloud a play about the life of Frederick Douglass and John Collison of the Richmond Unitarian Church, a Lincoln impersonator, delivered a monologue. Over the holidays, participants put together a "Christmas giving" program. At another meeting, they enjoyed a slide presentation by a member of the United Church Women on her trip to Japan.[255]

The twenty-four female participants responded enthusiastically to the programs. Baker found them "eager for broader horizons and a greater understanding of the

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[255] Prince Edward Emergency Project Progress Report, 27 February 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; Baker, AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report, 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 23 February 1961, ibid.

meaning of civic responsibility." Together, they discussed and debated the meaning of foundational national documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights and explored their relevance to the situation in the county. In order to further "teach the meaning of what those young sit in upstarts like Jefferson and Patrick Henry were talking about," Baker organized a trip to Williamsburg. Tours of the historic buildings and lunch with members of the Williamsburg Interracial Committee furthered the discussion by bringing to the surface many of the credos and contradictions of the American Revolution.[256]

She put together a trip to Washington, D.C. in March, carefully organized to increase the supervisors' "awareness of their relationship to the government, and to enrich their outlook generally as leaders of the children in the Centers." A full schedule of civic and intercultural-themed events made for a day of experiences virtually unimaginable in Prince Edward County. The group sat in on a congressional session and attended a session of the Supreme Court, making visible the processes of the system that would eventually decide the county's case. They participated in a Department of Health, Education and Welfare workshop designed to provide the attendees an opportunity to learn about HEW and voice their questions and opinions regarding the situation in the county to federal officials.[257]

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[256] AFSC Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid; Baker, Letter to Family, 25 January 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU.

[257] Baker, Letter to Family, 25 March 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; Baker, AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report, 1961, 27 February 1961, ibid.

The group heard a speech at the Indian Embassy and toured various sites of worship around the city, including the National Cathedral, a mosque, and a synagogue. In the evening, the National Council of Negro Women treated the women to a buffet dinner and a theater party. Two months later, two of the participants brought the spirit of the citizenship schools to Farmville through organizing a community meeting around the themes of the trip. They facilitated two roundtable discussions on "My Government and How I Must Help Run It" and "What Washington Means to Me." In a letter to Jean Fairfax, Baker noted, "In confidence, this was done by two leaders who are probably, in an academic way, weakest in the group. I never was more impressed with anything in my life." Baker's investment in these women as individuals and community leaders paid dividends in nourishing the grassroots.[258]

Helen Baker's work in the county embodied the tenets of activist mothering, which embraced social activism as an avenue through which to address community needs, protect children, and secure a better future for young people in the community. Through the carload conferences and Leadership Institute, she strengthened traditional female networks and established communication between diverse individuals on the basis of their shared status as women and mothers. In providing a program of enrichment for Center supervisors, she enhanced their ability to apply the principles of activist mothering to their own work with the children. In encouraging young people to frequent the AFSC office, setting up the reading room next door, serving as a confidant and advisor for various youth groups, and organizing trips and programs for the teenage population,

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[258] Baker, AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report, 1961, 27 February 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; Baker Fairfax and Hartzler, 19 May 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Baker blurred the lines between community organizing and family-based labor. As Françoise Hamlin said of Clarksdale, Mississippi's Vera Mae Pigee, she "became an intermediary between parents and children, encouraging both to work for freedom while bridging the generational gap by focusing on a common goal."[259]

Other Allies: The Virginia Teachers Association and the Richmond Committee of Volunteers to Prince Edward

PECCA, AFSC, and the NAACP rejoiced when the Virginia Teachers Association (VTA) proposed to sponsor a month-long "crash" educational program in the county in July 1961. The School Board offered the public school buildings and buses for use. PECCA, however, always vigilant in protecting the legitimacy of the legal case through preventing any blurring of boundaries between the remedial programs and real public education, quickly rejected the offer. Organizers utilized training center and black church facilities instead. Hopeful that the schools would reopen in September, VTA leaders designed the program as a review of fundamental learning skills, namely "reading, writing and number skills, with special emphasis on the development of better study habits and the recall of knowledge previously taught." Jean Fairfax, however, saw multiple layers of significance in the project. She wrote VTA Executive Secretary J. Rupert Picott that despite the program's primary focus on teaching, it could be used on a

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[259] Françoise N. Hamlin, "Vera Mae Pigee: Mothering the Movement," *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 2005): 19-27. See also Nancy Naples, "Activist Mothering: Cross-Generational Continuity in the Community Work of Women from Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 6 (September 1992): 441-463, and Katrina Bell McDonald, "Black Activist Mothering: A Historical Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 11 (December 1997): 773-795.

political level "to demonstrate that the educational gap between Negro and white children can be closed."[260]

The various contributing sponsors shared the financial costs of the project, and organizers submitted appeals for funds to private foundations. PECCA handled facilities and logistics and recruited host families to feed and lodge the participating teachers. AFSC assisted with procuring educational materials and arranged several meetings for the volunteers. The in-house VTA Project Committee recruited teachers, wrote the curriculum, provided the bulk of the materials, and supervised the teaching staff. Forty-seven teachers, two of whom were white, participated. They came from all across the state, as well as the District of Columbia, arriving in the county in early July for a four week stay. The approximately 400 children who turned out for the program were given diagnostic tests and grouped based on their abilities into sections of thirty apiece. Classes met five days a week from 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Organizers broke them into three parts – math from 8:15-9:30, verbal skills from 9:45-11:00 and reading and study skills from 11:15-12:00 – ultimately totaling sixty-five hours of instruction.[261]

When the Teaching Machines Corporation donated twenty-five teaching machines to the AFSC to allow it to explore the effectiveness of using programmed materials in intensive educational projects, project organizers designated one of the seventh-ninth

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[260] Griffin to W. Edward Smith, 23 June 1961, NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 20; J. Rupert Picott, Executive Secretary, Virginia Teachers Association, to Banks and Griffin, 18 May 1961, ibid; Fairfax to Picott, 23 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38195, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[261] Picott to Banks and Griffin, 18 May 1961, NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 20; Virginia Teachers Association, Plan of Operation: Remedial Instruction Program, Prince Edward County, Virginia, Summer 1961, p. 1-3, NAACP Papers, ibid; Fairfax to Theodore Weller, President, Teaching Machines Corporation, 29 September 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38195, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

grade sections as an experimental group. As Jean Fairfax subsequently noted, "these children were really hungry for education. There were no discipline problems." The project stimulated longing for real schools, and Fairfax noted in December that "for the first time in my trips to Prince Edward County, I sensed real bitterness among Negroes about what has happened."[262]

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In January 1961, a young white Richmond social worker named Edward Harden Peeples, Jr. heard Helen Baker address the Virginia Council on Human Relations. In the course of her talk, she encouraged those with concern for the children to bring their skills to the county to serve as volunteer activity leaders. A recent convert to racial egalitarianism, Peeples burned with desire to act upon his new convictions. He previously discussed with some friends the possibility of organizing a volunteer group to offer weekend recreational programs in the county, but accepted advice to wait for an invitation rather than "just descend upon a place with a gaggle of people at your own convenience and expect to be automatically accepted or achieve very much." Baker's call for assistance provided exactly the sort of invitation for which he had been waiting.[263]

Peeples and a few friends lost little time in approaching the presenter with the idea of baseball league for Farmville boys. Baker cleared the idea with PECCA and

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[262] Fairfax to Weller, ibid; Fairfax to Community Relations Program Committee, 13 September 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38173, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[263] Edward H. Peeples, Jr., "In Genuinely Democratic Service The Servant in Well Served," unpublished paper, original notes written September 1961, revised May 27, 2001, 1965 Box, Prince Edward County Articles and Reports Post 1965 Folder, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

distributed posters around town. She also recruited a few local men, namely Lenrod Blowe - the county's Negro Farm Agent and a highly respected member of the black community - to help with the coaching. By March, twenty to thirty teenage boys, three white volunteers, and a handful of local men gathered at the Farmville Recreational Center each Saturday to play ball. The reception accorded the volunteers the first week by the white authorities was decidedly frosty. Two policemen spent the afternoon swaggering back and forth around the baseball field, periodically resting their hands on their guns. When the group got in their car to return to Richmond, the policemen tailed them to the county line. Undaunted, the volunteers returned the following week and the league flourished. Peeples and Blowe worked faithfully to give the boys something to look forward to each week and provide vitally important opportunities for group interaction and lessons in teamwork.[264]

Looking to expand the work, Peeples joined forces with a group of like-minded individuals from Richmond's First Unitarian Church to organize the Richmond Committee of Volunteers to Prince Edward in July 1961. Through Helen Baker, the group worked out an agreement with Recreation Center leader Harriet Allen to use the building each Saturday for arts and crafts, movies, games, drama, poetry readings and dance classes. One week, the activity in the Recreation Center yard drew the attention of the white child next door, who hung on the fence separating her parents' home from the property, longingly watching the black children at play. As Peeples later recalled, "I'm sure that child was envious...gosh, they're having so much fun, I would like to join

[264] Ibid.

them...but she was being taught to be a white person." When he invited her to join the activity, her mother called the police, pulling the child inside and slamming the door.[265]

The Committee of Volunteers was extremely diverse, comprised of individuals from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, social classes, religions and political affiliations. As Peeples reminisced in 2001:

> When we emerged from our automobiles, in this place so fraught with white-black discord, we must have looked like a diorama of the demographic future of America. But we soon learned from the icy stares, the open hostility, the refusals of service in stores, and the occasional threats of violence which we confronted, that we were indeed a menacing vision to many of the whites of Prince Edward County.

The committee continued its service to the black community through 1962, when more established organizations, such as the Virginia Teachers Association, took over much of its work.[266]

In addition to his work with the Committee of Volunteers, Ed Peeples also played a pivotal role in the 1960-61 campaign to desegregate Richmond restaurants. Upon leaving Virginia for graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, he maintained his interest in the Prince Edward situation. In 1963, he completed a masters' thesis entitled "A Perspective on the Prince Edward County School Issue," a study of community power dynamics drawn from extensive interviews in the county. Returning to his native Richmond to teach, he threw himself into organizing the Virginia College Council on Human Relations. From 1963 through the early 1970's, he worked extensively with the

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[265] Ibid; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 2.

[266] Edward H. Peeples, Jr., "In Genuinely Democratic Service The Servant in Well Served," unpublished paper, original notes written September 1961, revised May 27, 2001, 1965 Box, Prince Edward County Articles and Reports Post 1965 Folder, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

AFSC School Desegregation Program, spearheading fact-finding missions across the South. In 1966, he directed the region's first interracial Encampment for Citizenship, enduring a summer of slashed tires, physical assaults, threats and gunshots in Knox County, Kentucky. Three years later, he put his public health credentials to use in authoring a jointly-sponsored AFSC/SRC study of racial, class, and gender discrimination in the federal, state, and NGO response to Hurricane Camille. After earning his doctorate in sociology from the University of Kentucky, Peeples returned to Richmond to teach preventative medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, chair the city Commission on Human Relations, and involve himself in race relations and public health projects across the state.[267]

In the early spring of 1961, a small group of Prince Edward teenagers began to make plans for a homegrown recreational/social program. Christened the Teenage Club, the group crystallized with the return of the out-of-county students at the beginning of the summer. The seventy-eight young people who comprised the club planned an activity every week, primarily sewing and woodworking groups, charm school, and activities to improve members' communication skills. With Baker's sponsorship, they held monthly dances and took a trip to the University of North Carolina to tour the campus and visit the University Planetarium. Years later, James Ghee, by then a practicing lawyer with a degree from the University of Virginia, reflected on the ways in which the closings altered the course of his life:

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[267] Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 3, 8, 20, 25, 30; "Examples of Involvement of Edward H. Peeples in Race Related Activities," 15 June 2004, Author's Personal Files; Edward H. Peeples and John V. Moeser, "Lest We Forget," *Southern Exposure* (July/August 1985): 2-3.

> After the schools were closed, I became more involved in my environment. I also expanded that environment. ...Now, for a fifteen year old black from Prince Edward County to go to a planetarium was something vastly different than his experience had been...All of this, because of a new environment or a wider environment, I think had a lot to do with what reserves I was able to fall back on and say, 'maybe there's something else I can do.'[268]

Ghee's reflections illustrate a larger point about the events in the county between 1959 and 1961. The decision to close the public schools plunged Prince Edward into a maelstrom of activity. The stark immediacy of the situation and its disproportionate impact upon the most vulnerable members of society propelled the majority of county residents into active affiliation with either the Prince Edward County Christian Association or the Prince Edward School Foundation. In the white community, most parents joined the leaders' celebration of the virtues of private education, many making significant sacrifices in order to do so. The county's small number of moderates and public education enthusiasts struggled to find a position from which to assail the fortress of white solidarity.

In black neighborhoods, individuals who once endured the inequalities of Jim Crow in relative quiet began to actively resist. They attended mass meetings and refused white "suggestions" to act as observers. They sustained, supported, and taught in the training centers. They formed clubs and associations and welcomed the progressive groups eager to offer support. Standing as a unified force, they refused to capitulate or allow themselves to be co-opted by white schemes such as Southside Schools. Through an enormous number of daily activities ranging from stopping by the AFSC or PECCA office to helping their children with lessons at home to taking a citizenship trip to

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[268] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 30 March 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 15 March 1961, ibid; James Ghee interview, 26 September 1989, transcript, p. 45, 1962 Box, Folder 38591, ibid.

Washington D.C., blacks resisted white attempts to deny their children a future by simply surviving and maintaining unity. Nonetheless, suffering, sacrifice and grief lay close to the surface. Angry and disillusioned residents resented the burden of spending their time crusading rather than living, and many wished only to resume their "normal" lives. As Helen Baker so well summed up the day-in and day-out tragedy of living under such conditions:

> We daily exchange all of the pleasant courtesies as we meet in the stores, post office or on the street. These pleasant greetings and our menial contacts in services are our only points of contact, so that there is absolutely no communication between the races about any of the problems which have thoroughly upset our lives here. We laugh in passing about the weather as if we are each unaware of the loads on our hearts because of the children's absences. We buy and sell and bargain together forever pushing back the truth – pushing back the bridge that might unite us: the suffering, the yearning in the hearts of all of the people in this county to find a real solution to this crisis.[269]

[269] Helen Baker, "The Prince Edward Story," p. 2, 15 February 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid.

CHAPTER 4

"THE GREATEST GIFT WE EVER SHALL RECEIVE:" THE OUT-OF-COUNTY PLACEMENT PROGRAMS, 1960-63

In July 1963, a young man from Prince Edward County named Moses Scott wrote an open letter to the people of Newton, Massachusetts. Scott, who had graduated from Newton High School the previous month, could not close the door on this chapter of his life without telling town residents how deeply their welcoming friendliness had touched him. Posing the rhetorical question of where he would be without the generosity of the Newton community, he noted:

> I would probably be spitting those words of slavery – "yes suh, yes suh, Mr. Charlie," – to some member of the "superior race." My position in life would have been relegated to that of a slave – albeit a freed slave. To be able to attend school is usually taken for granted. However, we, the young students from Prince Edward attending school here consider the opportunity to receive an education in a good school system the greatest gift that we have ever received or ever shall receive.[270]

Moses Scott was one of sixty-seven Prince Edward students placed with out-of-state host families (both black and white) or in boarding schools between 1960 and 1963 under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee's Emergency Placement Project. The project served junior high and high school age students who desired to continue their education but came from families unable to arrange alternatives on their own. Between 1959 and 1963, Prince Edward residents sent hundreds of school-age children away from the county to live with relatives and family friends. Parents possessing greater financial resources often relocated their families or purchased/rented

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[270] "Newton Boy Student Is Grateful to City," *Newton Graphic*, 11 July 1963, clipping, Boston Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

properties in neighboring counties to make their children eligible for functioning public school systems. The AFSC program served those who remained economically tied to the county and lacked trustworthy relatives and/or friends to function as foster families.

Though it impacted only a small fraction of the out-of-school population, the placement project exerted a profound and life-long influence upon participants. Crossing regional, racial and class boundaries that had previously seemed impermeable, the program enabled participants to continue their schooling and provided opportunities for cultural exposure and interracial contact virtually unknown in Southside Virginia. It brought eight states, sixteen communities and three private schools into intimate involvement with the crisis through aiding the children whose lives had been turned upside down. Eighteen Prince Edward students who may have otherwise never been accorded an opportunity to continue their education graduated from high school under the auspices of the placement project, and countless others returned to the newly-opened Prince Edward Free Schools on or close to the appropriate grade level for their ages.[271]

Placement students returned home more articulate, more confident, more aware of the world around them and strongly committed to integration. Though many saw evidence of racial prejudice in their host communities, they also formed reciprocal friendships with white teenagers or strong emotional bonds with white host families, sponsoring committee members or teachers. They brought home expanded career aspirations and strong commitments to pursuing a college education. Some threw themselves into leadership roles in the local struggle, embracing direct action as the best means for overthrowing white domination. Emboldened by new experiences, increased

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[271] Betty Brinson, "The AFSC and School Desegregation: Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1959-1964," *Friends Journal* (April 2004): 21-25.

self-confidence, and a broader vision of what life could be like, disproportionate numbers of AFSC kids braved jail cells and picket lines in the summer of 1963 to challenge the white power structure. The influence of the placement program on participants' lives proved lasting. By the early 1990's, program veterans were more likely to have left Prince Edward County and be active in their communities, and were more optimistic about their opportunities for success in American society. Most attained higher educational levels and socioeconomic status than those who had remained in the county throughout the crisis years and were more likely to work in jobs classified as professional in nature.[272]

The Emergency Placement Project garnered more publicity than any other AFSC program in the county. Commentators seized on its human interest component as a narrative thread that humanized and personalized a complex story of municipal defiance, constitutional standoff, and regional politics, and many used the program as a subject for moving and insightful news articles. Nevertheless, most repeatedly portrayed the program as a stand-alone initiative rather than an integral component of a larger AFSC attempt to address all dimensions of the crisis. Organizers, however, viewed the program as a component part of their efforts to balance community organization, national and state level lobbying for structural change, and programming focused on meeting the immediate needs of diverse individuals affected by the closings. They embraced placement as a prime opportunity to fulfill the goal that lay at the root of all AFSC programming: investing in participants and building their capacity as leaders and engaged citizens. This

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[272] Margaret Hale-Smith, "The Effects of Early Educational Disruption on the Belief Systems and Educational Practices of Adults," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (1993): 171-189.

juxtaposition of central objective and holistic approach marked all of the organization's efforts in the county and served as the AFSC's unique contribution to managing the crisis.

Before turning to the AFSC program in depth, it is important to note the other avenues, both organized and informal, through which students left the county to pursue their education. An unknown number of families packed their bags and left Farmville altogether, resettling in areas with functioning school systems. Of those whose parents stayed, Vonita White Foster's experience was somewhat typical of that of an education-conscious, financially stable family. When the schools closed in 1959, the five White children were sent to Baltimore to live with relatives for two years. She and one sister stayed with their grandparents, two other sisters with an aunt and uncle, and her brother with another aunt and uncle. The separation was "devastating to all of us," for the family was a close one.[273]

Facing the prospect of leaving home and family, even to live with relatives, was a terrifying experience for the White children. Foster spent much of summer 1959 scared and sad, envious of her friends remaining in Farmville, angry at local officials and white residents, and upset with her own parents for placing education above family togetherness. Foster's parents owned a dry-cleaning business, Master Cleaners, which provided a steady, if not lucrative, income that that they could not afford to abandon if they hoped to keep the family financially afloat. By sacrificing, skimping and saving,

[273] Vonita White Dandridge [Foster], interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 29 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

they managed to finance their children's education at Baltimore's St. Edward's Catholic School, but the possibility of accompanying them to the city was out of the question.[274]

This living arrangement continued until 1961, when the elder Whites, acknowledging their offspring's misery, rented a home in neighboring Cumberland County. Every morning for two more years, they transported Foster and her siblings to the empty home to wait for the Cumberland County School District bus and returned to pick them up in the evening. Foster's father, Reginald White, Sr., reflected proudly in 1992 that his children did not miss a day of school from 1959 to the opening of the Free Schools in 1963. This remarkable feat of keeping five children in school for four years without any gaps was most atypical, but the strategies employed by the Whites – renting a home in an adjoining county and sending their children to live with relatives – were common.[275]

J.T. Jackson, Jr.'s family also managed to ensure that he and his siblings finished high school. His oldest brother left the county with the Kittrell College group to finish his senior year in North Carolina, while his oldest sister went to live with acquaintances in Martinsville. He, his two younger sisters, and their mother relocated to Philadelphia for two years, where they rented an apartment for the first year and lived with an aunt the second, before returning to the county to enroll in the Free Schools in 1963. As

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[274] Vonita White Foster and Gerald Anthony Foster, *Silent Trumpets of Justice: Integration's Failure in Prince Edward County* (Hampton, VA: U.S. & U.B. Communication Systems, 1993), p. 59-64.

[275] Vonita White Dandridge [Foster], interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 29 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Reginald White, Sr., interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 10 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

consequence of his parents' sacrifices, Jackson has had a lifelong sense that if he does not take full advantage of the opportunities offered him he is shortchanging the people who gave so much to keep him in school. As he reflected thirty years after the fact. "It's given me this burden of responsibility that somehow I've gotta go out and conquer the world," a burden he feels he is now passing down to his children.[276]

James White's family responded to the crisis by splitting into two households. James and his brother accompanied his father to Luray and Sussex Counties, where the elder White found teaching jobs and the boys attended school. His uncle rented a house in Cumberland County in order to enable White's sisters to attend the county schools. Such a lifestyle took an enormous toll on the family, both socially and financially. Nonetheless, as White recollects, there was never any discussion about what had to be done: "You had to get an education. You didn't have any choice. That's nothing that had to be discussed there."[277]

Like so many others, Edward Morton's family turned inward to find solutions to the crisis. After three years at home, his older sister in Chester, Pennsylvania brought him to live with her. He spent two years in Chester's integrated schools, where he found himself far behind the other students and something of an object of pity, due to his reputation as "the boy from Prince Edward County." One of his lingering memories of these days is how much he missed his mother. Returning to the county when the public schools reopened, he finally graduated from Moton High School at age 22. Still, Morton

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[276] J.T. Jackson, Jr., interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 11 November 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[277] James White, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 19 August 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

was more fortunate than his younger siblings, who remained at home and received no education throughout these years, illustrating the limits of families' informal arrangements. Though many Prince Edward blacks had close relatives living outside the county, the size and limited financial resources of these families made it incredibly difficult to provide for all the children who needed another place to live.[278]

Residing with relatives in neighboring counties presented unique problems. James Ghee's parents sent him to live with his grandmother in Cumberland County in the fall of 1960, but school authorities expelled the twenty Prince Edward "transfers" only five weeks into the school year upon grounds of overcrowding. As late as 1979, Ghee remained convinced that the State Board of Education forced the Cumberland principal's hand. Some children, such as Rita Moseley, whose mother sent her 120 miles away to Blacksburg, lived with total strangers. At least one experienced the sort of tragedy that many parents may have feared. In 2004, Barbara Hicks Spring told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that the father in her Ashland host family regularly molested her. Spring's experience provides a brutal reminder of the agonizing dilemma parents faced: keep their children at home where they were safe, even at the cost of watching their future slowly crumble, or send them away in hopes of providing them a better life, entrusting them to the care of others and risking the possibility that they might be injured or abused.[279]

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[278] Edward Morton, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 25 September 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[279] Tyler Whitley, "Black Writing New Page in Prince Edward 'Racist' History," *Richmond News Leader*, 23 November 1979; Michael Janofsky, "A New Hope for Dreams Suspended by Segregation," *New York Times*, 31 July 2005; Paul Nussbaum and Annette John-Hall, "Fight for School Equality Still Leaves Scars for Many," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* 12 May 2004.

Even those who possessed a safe home environment were often lonely and bewildered, forced away from their parents by circumstances beyond their control. Helen Baker often shared the story of an eight year old girl sent to live with a great-aunt in Petersburg, some sixty-five miles away from Farmville. Unlike the children living in other states, she spent her weekends at home, but her brief visits did not lessen her homesickness. One Friday evening, her mother opened her laundry bag to find a plaintive note reading, "I want to go home now. Mother, I love you so much. I want to go home." As Baker always pointed out, this little girl was only one of an estimated 400 black children forced into bootlegging an education outside their hometown. No doubt others shared her homesickness and Vonita White Foster's childish conviction that attending school was not worth so much suffering. While some of the migrant children fought hard, sometimes even against their own families, for the opportunity to continue their education, others found themselves sent away over their own objections by parents or guardians convinced that without an education, only poverty and unemployment awaited a black child in America.[280]

The Virginia Teachers Association (VTA) wholeheartedly shared this opinion. In the fall of 1962, in cooperation with PECCA, the group launched the Prince Edward County Pupil Relocation Project to place interested students in functioning school districts. Rev. Griffin stumped energetically for the project, encouraging county residents to avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the VTA and assembling the list of prospective participants. Ultimately, the VTA found homes and schools for nearly every child on Griffin's list - over 100 in total - for the 1962-1963 academic year. Local

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[280] Helen Baker, "The Prince Edward County Story," 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

teachers' associations and citizens committees assumed responsibility for the children, shouldering the responsibility of providing lodging and board and, when necessary, raising tuition funds. Parents furnished books, clothing and spending money and provided transportation to the host community.[281]

Some Virginia school districts waived tuition for Prince Edward students, while others mandated payment. In Gladys, where conditions were crowded and district administrators refused to admit pupils from other counties, the local teachers association took upon itself the responsibility of contributing tuition costs toward another placement. Some districts, such as Louisa County, worried that the decision to grant admission to a Prince Edward student could be construed as a political statement. Alberta Guy Despot of the Louisa County Teachers Association wrote VTA Executive Secretary J. Rupert Picott that her administrative team "requested that I inform you that permission was granted for the purpose of helping the child and not for publicity."[282]

Some of the children stayed with members of the VTA. Louisa County teachers specifically requested a middle school age girl willing to live with a teacher and ride the bus to school with her. Others resided with non-teachers whose homes had been approved by the sponsoring associations as "conducive to [the children's] comfort and

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[281] J. Rupert Picott, Executive Secretary, Virginia Teachers Association, to "Friend," 27 September 1962, Virginia Teachers Association Papers, Series IV: Office of the Executive Secretary, Sub-Series F: Correspondence by County, Box 61, Folder 2, VSU; L. Francis Griffin to Picott, 30 January 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 24, Series B, Reel 27; Picott to Mrs. N.W. Morgan, York County Teachers' Association, 27 March 1963, VTA Papers, Series IV, Sub-Series F, Box 61, Folder 4, VSU.

[282] Picott to Elva Strother, Culpeper County Teachers Association, 8 February 1963, VTA Papers, Series IV, Sub-Series F, Box 61, Folder 4, VSU; Lloyd Abbot, President, Gladys Teachers Association to Picott, January 1963, ibid; Alberta Guy Despot, Louisa County Teachers Association, to Picott, 24 September 1963, VTA Papers, Series IV, Sub-Series F, Box 61, Folder 2, VSU.

contentment." Some local associations requested interviews with prospective students and their parents before formalizing their sponsorship; others did not. For the most part, local sponsoring associations lacked the finances to sponsor multiple children. The consequently disparate placements could not provide visiting students a community of fellow Prince Edward children. Organizers focused exclusively on education as the singular goal of the project and made few efforts to ensure that participants experienced integration or interracial contact. They placed few - if any – children in desegregated schools.[283]

Picott and the VTA initially hoped to place more children than they eventually did, but despite a limited budget, the reasons for the low (in relation to the overall number of school-deprived children in the county) numbers originated in Prince Edward County. In Griffin's perspective, the reasons were fourfold: 1) Some county residents' commitment to seeing vindication of the constitutional right to free public education led them to refuse to accept any educational opportunities; 2) The county's agrarian heritage bred in many black parents a great appreciation of the values of "place" and "home," which made them extremely hesitant to send their children away; 3) The long and difficult struggle wore down spirits, causing some to lose all faith in the future; and 4) Like any locality, Prince Edward County possessed some residents "who just don't care and regardless of external stimuli remain a satisfied, lethargic and complacent lot." Given these mitigating factors, Griffin deemed the Pupil Relocation Project a success in

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[283] Despot to Picott, 24 September 1963, VTA Papers, Series IV, Sub-Series F, Box 61, Folder 2, VSU; Louise Pryor, President, Hanover County Teachers Association to Elizabeth Hicks, 17 December 1962, ibid; W.R. Henderson, President, Gloucester County Teachers Association, to Elizabeth Hicks, 10 January 1963, VTA Papers, Series IV, Sub-Series F, Box 61, Folder 4, VSU.

providing placement opportunities for any students/parents still living in the county in 1962-1963 who desired assistance in returning to school.[284]

Another program operating from 1961-1963 sent twenty-two Prince Edward children to the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. Nineteen of the participants lived in the city with black families, while the other three resided with white hosts in suburban Montgomery County, Maryland. A Quaker woman exposed to the Prince Edward crisis through volunteer work with the AFSC spearheaded the Montgomery County project. Taking it upon herself to organize a small-scale relief effort in her hometown, she recruited three white families to serve as host parents and acted as a counselor to the visiting students. The relative wealth of this suburban community made it possible for the host families to care for the children without remuneration. Hosts individually handled the arrangements with the children's schools and provided spending money, clothing, and transportation. No central sponsoring committee existed to oversee the project.[285]

Administration of the urban program operated rather differently. A sponsoring committee comprised of black educators and social workers. as well as individuals affiliated with the NAACP and Howard University, handled fund-raising and interaction with the press. Organizers used the monies raised to pay nonresident tuition for the students and to help defray expenses for some of the host families. One of the committee members, a psychology professor affiliated with a Catholic relief organization, devoted himself to obtaining scholarships from Catholic schools for some of the children. Organizers divided the committee into subgroups, assigning each team specific

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[284] Griffin to Picott, 30 January 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 24, Series B, Reel 27.

[285] Frances P. Simsarian, "Twenty-Five Foster Placements: The Prince Edward County Children," *Social Work*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (January 1966): 88-97.

responsibilities. One subgroup traveled to Prince Edward to get to know the participating students and their parents. Another devoted itself to recruiting host families, while a third concentrated on providing counseling services to the students, assigning a professional social worker or educator to each participant.[286]

Married couples headed eighteen of the twenty-seven host families, while women headed seven. Six of the couples had no children, and five additional households included adult children no longer living at home. Seventeen host mothers worked full-time outside the home and two part-time; six were full-time homemakers. Some of the working women had previously considered taking a child into their home through a traditional foster placement, but had declined to apply, knowing that they would certainly be rejected. Most agencies making foster care placements in the mid-1960s automatically disqualified working women from consideration. Occupations varied widely among the women – some worked as teachers and counselors and others performed unskilled labor, while still others served the federal government as clerks or secretaries. A similar pattern held true among the host fathers – many held government or teaching jobs, but significant numbers also labored in industry or construction. Sixteen of the families took in a child in response to television, radio, and press appeals for host families. Six more agreed to participate when approached by a friend on the sponsoring committee. Three more were drawn in through other involvement with the project: in the second year of the program, one family took in a child they had tutored the

[286] Ibid.

previous year, while two members of the sponsoring committee welcomed students whose original placements failed to materialize.[287]

The participating children constituted a fairly representative cross-section of the Prince Edward black community. Their parents labored as sharecroppers, farmers, nurses, and unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. School officials diagnosed twenty of the twenty-two as two to four years behind their urban peers in scholastic achievement. The only two children working at grade level were siblings whose mother constituted the only high school graduate among the parents. Their host families consistently described the Prince Edward youth as small in stature, young for their age, and immature in both appearance and behavior. When interviewed in 1964, the majority of host parents made much of what they considered the children's "cultural deprivation" – noting that they had expended much energy in teaching their guests when to bathe and change clothing, to flush the toilet, to wear pajamas, and to try new foods. One family in particular remembered that when first introduced to broccoli, their visiting child had asked, "What are these – trees?"[288]

Host families expecting communicative, outgoing guests were most likely to be disappointed in their experience with the program. As social worker Frances Simsarian noted, "with a few notable exceptions, the children were not talkative, grateful, or expansive." Most host families did not recognize their guests' reticence as cultural – the manifestation of a southern black culture that taught children to remain quiet and undemanding while in a strangers' homes and equated discretion with good manners. A

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[287] Ibid.

[288] Ibid.

host mother who made a point of taking weekend excursions with her visiting son frequently lamented his relative silence on the trips. Overall, white hosts resented silence more than black ones. Two teenage girls described as "quiet and uncommunicative" by their white host families found a more accommodating environment when moved to black placements their second year in the program. While the girls' reticence probably did not decrease in their new homes, their new host mothers calmly accepted their quietness. One first noted that, "I realized that she was not the kind that was going to say much," while the other explained that being from the country herself, she had said little during her first few years in Washington and was therefore not surprised by her host daughter's reserve.[289]

Though the sponsoring committee handled many aspects of the project in a centralized manner, it did not facilitate communication between parents and host families, or offer any assistance in navigating the lines of overlapping authority and/or responsibility. In retrospect, misunderstandings between the three groups (parents, hosts, and children) supplied or augmented much of the tension in placements. Many host families complained that their children's parents did not write to them or send thank you notes to the adults, unaware that many of the Prince Edward parents found it nearly impossible to communicate coherently in writing. Others resented that parents did not provide better clothing, more spending money, or "appropriate" Christmas gifts for their children. One host family resented their guest's parents hustling him away at the end of

[289] Ibid.

the school year without saying "goodbye" or "thank you," while another shied away from writing their child over vacations out of fear of encouraging his parents to visit.[290]

Some placements were tense, while others were particularly happy and satisfying for all parties. A childless couple who took in a seventeen year old boy described him in glowing terms, praising his determination and adaptability. The boy and his hosts corresponded frequently following his return to Prince Edward. The couple traveled to the county to visit him at home and once brought him back to Washington for the weekend. One older woman who "adopted" a thirteen year old girl included her in her church activities and helped her through bouts of homesickness with reminders of how fortunate she was to be in school. When the placement ended, the two corresponded regularly. This girl's sister, who was placed with another family, formed a close relationship with her host sibling that continued after her return to Farmville. Host parents who enjoyed successful placements often subsequently opened their homes to traditional foster care children and other young visitors, while the majority of transfer students returned to Prince Edward with stronger academic skills and new experiences and ideas.[291]

The AFSC Placement Program differed from the Washington and VTA programs in several important ways. AFSC placements concentrated around AFSC regional offices or in communities possessing established ties to the organization. Active sponsoring committees facilitated communication between host families, parents and students, carefully monitored students' academic progress and social adjustment, and facilitated

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[290] Ibid.

[291] Ibid.

large-group social and cultural activities for program participants. Sponsoring communities were extremely diverse, including college towns, cities, suburbs, wealthy enclaves and working class towns, majority black and majority white areas, meaningfully integrated communities and regions taking the first steps toward desegregation. Committees varied in racial, religious and socio-economic composition, as well as in their previous exposure to Quaker ideology and the AFSC. In accordance with the AFSC tradition of racial reconciliation, the program was consciously interracial. Interracial sponsoring committees placed students almost exclusively in desegregated schools. Some participants resided with white host families. Organizers planned integrated group outings, often in conjunction with interracial or white community, church, and youth groups.

Though program organizers took academics seriously, they were adamant that participating children do more than simply attend school. Committees planned cultural and recreational activities and took the students on field trips. AFSC staff prodded host parents to discover their children's interests and plan family outings incorporating them, and encouraged the students themselves to join extracurricular activities. Staff and committee members deliberately involved themselves in many aspects of the children's lives. Due to the length of the program and the small number of participants involved, AFSC's Jean Fairfax perceptively observed in 1962 that, "the project has shifted from an emergency placement service to an involvement in depth in the lives of some children at a very important period in their development." Organizers desired to expose a small group of Prince Edward students to life in culturally vibrant interracial communities and

equip them with the skills and experiences necessary to become leaders and advocates for desegregation upon their return to Virginia.[292]

In steering the program, staff members and volunteers continually referred to a set of guidelines developed in December 1959 by AFSC, NAACP, and Southern Regional Council representatives to direct their work in Prince Edward.[293] They sought to ensure that placement was educationally sound and contributed to preparing the community for integration, without in any way jeopardizing the court case or creating the appearance of relieving local authorities of their responsibility to maintain public schools. As they laid plans for the first year of the program, AFSC staff publicized their efforts as "a temporary measure aimed at salvaging some of the young people who might become overage or lose interest in completing their high school education before the present crisis is settled."[294]

Yet even in these early days, staff members also recognized that the project offered the potential to turn the nightmare that had befallen the county into an opportunity for a small number of children. Fairfax hinted in December 1959 that, if approached with vision, the crisis might create "opportunities for sponsoring imaginative

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[292] Jean Fairfax to Louise Young, 3 January 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38329, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Greater Boston Committee for Placement of Prince Edward County Children, "Notes on Special Meeting with Jean Fairfax," 27 September 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, ibid.

[293] The Southern Regional Council (SRC), headquartered in Atlanta, was the region's leading organization of indigenous southern progressives. The SRC and its affiliates, the state human relations councils, supported desegregation and interracialism, but preached a flexible and pragmatic approach to the enforcement of *Brown v. Board of Education*. See LeRoy Collins, *The South and the Nation*, (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1960.)

[294] "A Consultation on Emergency Educational Services for Displaced Pupils," 19 December 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38116, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "Emergency Placement Program for Prince Edward County, Virginia Children," 17 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38130, ibid.

projects of real educational significance, for building up the morale and self-confidence of those involved, and for providing new and meaningful interracial experiences." The careful creativity of the placement project breathed life into all of these hopes, turning them into real experiences for the sixty-seven participating students.[295]

The project took flight in September 1960 with forty-seven teenagers and ten sponsoring communities spread out across six states – Dayton and Yellow Springs, Ohio; Iowa City and Scattergood School, Iowa; Kalamazoo and Inkster, Michigan; Baltimore, Maryland; Media and Lansdowne/Yeadon, Pennsylvania; and Moorestown, New Jersey. Ranging in age from thirteen to eighteen, the thirty boys and seventeen girls were a largely self-selected group. Acting upon a firm conviction that no children are less important than others, the AFSC invited all senior high students enrolled in the public schools in the 1958-1959 school year who had no prior record of severe social or academic maladjustment, and whose parents were unable to make arrangements without assistance, to apply for placement. They did not cherry-pick those at the top of their class. Only parents possessing the financial resources to send their children to private schools or responsible relatives in other parts of the state or country willing and able to board them were discouraged from utilizing the program. Staff members then opened spaces not filled by senior high students to sixth, seventh and eighth graders. As Fairfax recalled in 2005:

> We would have found places for everybody who came to us. The fact that there was a small number meant that the families were either making other arrangements or had decided that they were going to live it out and just keep the kids home. But they knew that they had the option of coming with us and we did not turn anybody down. We also did not "cream"... All the black families had

[295] Fairfax to Burns Chalmers, Washington, DC, 1 December 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38117, ibid.

suffered as a result of the closing of schools. It would have been unfair and really unethical to say that we would only take the kids who had done well in segregated schools.[296]

In general, the students who applied tended to be a bit more courageous or committed to getting back to school than their peers and possess parents who held higher than average educational and occupational aspirations for their children. Parents of students placed by the AFSC, while not highly educated, tended to be of a slightly higher socio-economic status than their neighbors and were more likely to hold subscriptions to newspapers and magazines. Exposure to ideas and experiences beyond county borders undoubtedly influenced parents' perception of the educational requirements for social mobility and the likelihood that completing high school would greatly improve their children's chances in life. As adults, James Edwards and Otis Wiley looked back on their families' decision to participate in the AFSC program with reminiscences that "it was positive that my mother had the knowledge to understand that her children's education was very important," and "my mother and father were impacted by my leaving, but they wanted what was best for us."[297]

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[296] Fairfax to Barbara Moffett, 2 October 1959, 1959 Box, Folder 38117, ibid; Juanita Morisey, "Study Proposal: Prince Edward County Emergency Placement Program," 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38169, ibid; Moffett, Memo to "All Concerned," 17 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38134, ibid; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 5.

[297] Robert Lee Green, Louis J. Hofmann, Richard J. Morse, Marilyn E. Hayes, and Robert F. Morgan, *The Educational Status of Children in a District Without Public Schools*, (East Lansing: Bureau of Educational Research, College of Education, Michigan State University, 1964), p. 126, 252; James E. Edwards, Sr., Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Otis Wiley, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

The choice to send their children away was difficult both emotionally and economically. Samuel Cobbs recalled both his mother's encouragement that he leave home and his father's concern about the loss of the boy's help on the farm, but acknowledged that ultimately his father "wanted me to finish high school too, like my mother did." Geneva Botts, a domestic who had only completed the third grade, and her thirteen year old daughter Barbara Ann, made the decision together that Barbara would apply to the program. Letting her go was painful for Geneva Botts, but she remained determined that her daughter receive the education she herself lacked.[298]

The search for host families and sponsoring committee members began in AFSC regional offices with pre-existing community contacts. An international organization with a field of vision as broad as that of the AFSC possessed an extensive network of contacts that could always be counted on for support in getting new projects off the ground. According to Jean Fairfax, "An enormous Quaker constituency stands ready to help... The so-called Quaker family includes a lot of people who are not Quakers...people who would come forward because they were part of some [other AFSC] effort that was not necessarily a civil rights effort." Committee members included the daughter of a Viennese Catholic family active in the anti-Nazi underground during World War II, who later forged a close relationship with Fairfax during her years in the AFSC Foreign Service (1946-1948). As an adult, the daughter married an

[298] Samuel Cobbs, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire. 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Brinson: 21-25.

American, moved to the U.S., and learned of the placement project through her family's contacts with the AFSC.[299]

Marii Hasegawa of the Moorestown sponsoring committee possessed an even more intensely personal connection with the Quakers. Interned during World War II, Hasegawa and her family received relocation assistance from the AFSC after V-J Day. James Ghee's host mother in Iowa City, Mori Constantino, also came to know AFSC through her childhood experience with the relocation program. Constantino, her Italian American husband, and their two children embraced Ghee with empathy born of a shared experience with discrimination and took great pride in their status as a "United Nations" family.[300]

Regional office staff embraced the program wholeheartedly, even though a shortage of funds ensured that regional offices were responsible for supplementing the fundraising efforts of the sponsoring committees. His involvement with the program deeply touched Dayton's William Hayden, who noted that, "In my years with the Service Committee, I have never had a project which inspired such wonderful enthusiasm in everyone who hears of it. We are grateful to you for arranging for us to participate in it." Nevertheless, the administrative headaches inherent to a large scale project involving minors occasionally complicated matters. Robert Lyon of the New England Regional Office once teasingly told Jean Fairfax that the project was challenging him to keep his

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[299] Jean Fairfax interview, transcript, p. 12-13.

[300] Brinson: 21-25; Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project 1960-1963," p. 28, Hhttp://webarchive.afsc.org/archives/princeedward/JeansdocumentPEC102H; Jamie Ruff, "School Closing Opened Doors for Black Man," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 May 1994, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

"organizational-man-inclinations" under control. Well-illustrating the ubiquitous tension between activism and organizational bureaucracy, he noted that, "Here you're trying to save the world and I'm sunk low in the morass of AFSC bureaucracy – 'you can't save the world unless you do it through proper channels!' What a horrible end I'll come to!"[301]

Staff members' first task was recruiting and evaluating potential host families based upon criteria developed by Jean Fairfax and Juanita Morisey. Morisey, the special consultant for the Philadelphia Area Placement Project, oversaw much of the day to day management of the entire program during its first six months of operation and made several rounds of visits to the 1960-61 placements. Fairfax and Rev. Griffin also visited several of the sponsoring communities, both in 1960-61 and in the years to come, meeting with students, host families and committee members, smoothing over problems, checking on progress, and providing the students the comfort of a familiar face.

Fairfax and Morisey's guidelines sought families well-adjusted within their communities, internally harmonious and warm, and outgoing in nature. They insisted that selected individuals possess "a broad and flexible attitude in involving the children in religious activities," be willing to extend themselves to help them develop relationships with others their own age and actively promote interracial experiences. Interviewers sought families tolerant of "normal" teenage behavior such as dating, dancing and interest in popular music, and committed to offering their guests as broad a cultural

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[301] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 13; Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project 1960-1963," p. 11; Robert Lyon, Memo to Fairfax, 14 September 1961, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

experience as possible without becoming upset if he/she did not always respond enthusiastically.[302]

Selected families were diverse, yet bound together by middle class, upper middle class or upper working class socioeconomic status. Of the families in the Greater Boston (1962-1963) and Springfield/Holyoke, Massachusetts (1961-1963) projects, nine were black and four white. Seven host mothers were housewives, one was a cook, one a social worker, and another (a black woman) a social worker and part-time law student. Fathers' occupations ranged from electrical engineer, dentist, lawyer, and teacher to clock repairman, funeral director, MTA porter, foundry worker and Pullman porter. Families actively participated in a variety of organizations, including the Urban League, PTA, Girl & Boy Scouts, National Council of Jewish Women, NAACP, Chamber of Commerce, YMCA, American Jewish Congress, League of Women Voters, labor unions, and church council. They subscribed to periodicals such as *Life, Ebony, Saturday Review, Readers' Digest, National Geographic, The New York Times, Ladies' Home Journal, The New Yorker, The New Republic* and *Crisis*.[303]

Despite their sincere desire to help, many host parents entered the program with an assumption that they would be boarding children of high academic achievement or exceptional emotional maturity, creating "the expectation that the children would be exemplary in every way – an unrealistic expectation which led to disappointment of

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[302] "Suggestions About the Responsibility of the Host Family: Emergency Placement Program for Prince Edward County, Virginia Children," 17 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38130, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[303] Host Family Information Forms, 1962-1963, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Host Family Information Forms, 1962-1963, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

adults and guilt and resentment on the part of children." Profound class and regional differences underlay hosts' frustration with students who spoke in pronounced rural dialect, took the last piece of food at dinner or laughed too loudly, and children's resentment of adults who criticized their speech patterns, standards of cleanliness and approaches to schoolwork.[304]

This clash between urban middle class and rural socioeconomic values caught the majority of host parents off guard, and some complained to the AFSC that project staff should have applied more stringent criteria to the process of selecting students for participation. Parents tended to be highly concerned about the children's academic progress. Many insisted that their guests spend hours on homework and "pleasure" reading and fretted over their report cards. As Morisey noted, "They said that they were making allowances for lower educational standards and school missed, but they repeatedly compared the children's academic achievement to local standards of achievement."[305]

The majority of placement students took their studies seriously and many worried a great deal over their grades, but few attained academic excellence. Most were average students, some above average, and a few truly exceptional in ability. Yet the time out of school and the handicaps of a segregated educational system ensured that the majority entered placement working below grade level. Though many experienced a difficult academic adjustment, none of the students in the program ever constituted a discipline

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[304] Charlotte Epstein, Draft, "Prince Edward County Placement Project, 1960-1961: A Research Project," 1961, p. 3-5, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38169, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[305] Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid; Epstein, p. 6.

problem at school. Nevertheless, host families' misconception of the project as a rescue program for good students often led to dismay over the students' low marks. A few went so far as to object to the recreational and cultural aspects of the program, arguing that these activities diverted the children from their studies. Morisey and other AFSC staff members disagreed strenuously, arguing that cultural exposure and interracial contact were as important as academic improvement[306]

Another point of contention was personal freedom. Some children felt that their host parents were too strict in their insistence that they return promptly from school and social events and always ask permission before going places. They resented obeying the same rules as their often younger host siblings, arguing that they had more freedom to come and go as they pleased at home. Two of the eight students who returned to Farmville before the end of the year complained that they were being "deprived of their rights" by their hosts. The families in these situations often failed to grasp the way their guests' small town background, age, and need for independence made it difficult for them to understand and respect restrictions on their personal freedom. Conversely, the students generally did not take into account the dangers of city/suburban life or the fact that individuals who have assumed responsibility for other people's children will naturally experience a heightened sense of anxiety regarding their safety.[307]

AFSC engaged Charlotte Epstein, a Human Relations professor at the University of Pennsylvania, in 1961 to conduct a systematic study and evaluation of the placement project. Concerned with improving the program and providing a vessel to transmit to

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[306] Epstein, p. 12.

[307] Epstein, p. 5-6, 13.

other interested parties the lessons learned, staff members turned to an outside expert to provide an objective evaluation. Epstein's final report, based on extensive interviews with participating children and host parents as well as access to school records, standardized test scores and correspondence, pronounced the program a great success. "If the objectives of the project were to broaden the children's horizons and give them direction for the future," Epstein wrote, "there is every reason to hope that the objectives were reached." Epstein highlighted the children's academic progress, their excitement over new experiences and positive interracial contacts, and their renewed optimism that some people are truly willing to help others without expectation of personal gain. But she did not shy away from highlighting the problems that came to her attention.[308]

She noted that although most host families recognized the importance of accepting the children as they were while helping them to broaden their horizons, in reality, they found it very difficult to do so. "The undercurrent in many of the interviews," she wrote, "seemed to be one of urgency and anxiety to change these children as quickly as possible. There is no doubt that some of the children detected these feelings and therefore reacted with resistance, hostility and other evidences of disturbance." Others experienced feelings of guilt over a seeming inability to please their host parents. After two years with the same family, a girl from a Midwestern project wrote in answer to a staff question regarding her happiness with her living arrangements, "I was both happy and unhappy. I liked my family very much and I still do. However, the mother and I couldn't get along too well, because even though I tried very hard, I was unable to reach her standards." At least twenty of the forty-two families interviewed

[308] Epstein, p. 3.

admitted that they would have preferred to host students who were better adjusted, academically stronger, and more urban middle-class in their social mores.[309]

Black families spoke more often of the tension created by the differences between students' and hosts' backgrounds than white ones. Many middle-class northern blacks feared that students' transgressions against middle-class standards reflected poorly upon their hosts and upon African Americans in general. Juanita Morisey pinpointed the problem as early as December 1960, suggesting that:

> Implied, if not verbalized in most of their criticism of the children is extreme sensitivity that their own status in the community may be threatened and that of Negroes generally by any socially undesirable conduct on the part of the children.

Conscious that the Prince Edward youngsters provided some white northerners their first contact with black children, many black host parents worried that their guests' rural socio-economic values and academic handicaps fed stereotypes. The areas of difference between guests and hosts highlight class distinctions in the black community but perhaps even more significantly, testify powerfully to the cultural divide separating rural southerners and suburban northerners and midwesterners.[310]

Staff members responded to hosts' fears by reminding the concerned that genuine acceptance of African Americans as both a "race" and an association of individuals could not stand or fall upon only one image of the black community. They also pointed out the role economic selectivity played in the matching process. By and large, the majority of families possessing the resources to support an extra child enjoyed a base level of economic security and lived within close geographical proximity to an urban center.

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[309] Epstein, p. 12; Student Response to 1961-1962 Questionnaire, 1962 Box, Folder 38529, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[310] Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

Conversely, the students accepted for participation came from families financially unable to make their own arrangements for the children's schooling. As Morisey acknowledged,

> I'm sure that other student exchanges do take the socio-economic elements into consideration. The nature of our program made this impossible. It has sometimes been a source of tension. On the other hand, it has established communication across lines that are sometimes as difficult to penetrate as racial barriers.

By the third year of the program, students, host families, sponsoring committees, and AFSC staff members possessed more realistic ideas of what to expect from each other and better strategies for forestalling potential problems. The committee in Yellow Springs wryly poked fun at its own unrealistic and patronizing initial expectations, commenting:

> The students turned out to be rather ordinary teenagers. They did not demonstrate a burning zeal for racial injustice nor a consuming desire for knowledge nor an insatiable hunger for the aesthetic. Foiled in our desire to play Pygmalion,...we had to face the fact of our being less than perfect families dealing with rather less than perfect adolescents. Having revised our expectations, in fact as well as intellectually, we were able to proceed with fewer mishaps. We came to love and accept them for what they are.[311]

Later-organized projects better negotiated the miscommunications and misunderstandings that took some of the earlier communities by surprise. Now able to anticipate potential problems and provide helpful advice, staff members better prepared new sponsoring communities for the experience of hosting the Prince Edward children. . In laying the groundwork for a project in the Greater Boston area, members of the New England Regional Office staff told members of the new sponsoring committees:

> The children are good students and some of them are excellent – several made honor roll this year. However, a community should be aware of the fact that this isn't a group of little Ralph Bunches. As for the families, they are poor rural people, but with strong family and church ties. They are not the type of people

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[311] Ibid; Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 22.

> anxious to get rid of their kids, in fact most are reluctant to let them go. Most of the families have other children at home and would not be able to give much to the support, if any, of their child away from home.

Host families, committee members, students, and staff members hammered out goals and expectations in the crucible of experience and organizers clearly communicated them to the organizers of new projects. Furthermore, the majority of children placed in the later-organized projects brought with them significant experience in other host communities. Previous placement provided them familiarity with northern schools and the AFSC and they thus did not experience as many problems with homesickness and social adjustment as some of their predecessors.[312]

It is important to consider the almost unfathomable courage exhibited by the participating children. They left their homes and families at an emotionally turbulent stage in life to live with strangers – in some cases white strangers – in unfamiliar urban and suburban communities. Refusing to allow Prince Edward's segregationists to determine the course of their lives, they braved integrated schools despite the cultural and educational handicaps of an interrupted education and a lifetime of unequal opportunity. Though most struggled academically, the determination and seriousness with which they approached their schoolwork profoundly impressed many with whom they came into contact. As Moses Scott reflected years later, "I studied harder at Moorestown High School than I ever did in my life. I couldn't fail. I wouldn't fail." A few displayed

[312] AFSC New England Regional Office, "Prince Edward County, Virginia Emergency Placement Program," 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

remarkable academic potential. Many who finished high school while in the program won scholarships to college that opened new doors in their lives.[313]

Parents and Placement

Back in Prince Edward County, the placement project opened doors for an adult education program. Sensing that parents whose children were away (either under the AFSC umbrella or at Kittrell College) needed a support group to discuss their concerns and fellowship with others in similar circumstances, Helen Baker organized a Friends' Club in December 1960. Parents' primary concerns included whether host families would treat their children kindly, how they would deal with boy-girl relationships, and how the children would fare in integrated schools. As Baker told *Farmville Herald* reporter Ben Bowers during the first year of the project, reports from the children indicated that many enjoyed their integrated schools. Through the Friends' Club, she hoped to help parents cultivate a similar sense of optimism. "This group is made up of parents who need to understand what is happening to their children," Baker explained:

> One of the things that is true in the South or wherever people are so avidly and viciously opposed to anything that sounds like integration is that they haven't had good experiences…I think that where people are kept apart, both groups believe the worst.[314]

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[313] Paul Nussbaum and Annette John-Hall, "Fight for School Equality Still Leaves Scars for Many," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 May 2004.

[314] AFSC Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, 9 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; American Friends Service Committee, "Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report," August 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38173, ibid; Ben Bowers, "Quakers' Urgent Project Nears 1st Anniversary," *Farmville Herald*, 10 February 1961.

The Club threw a Christmas party for the away-from-home group, and hosted a discussion with the AFSC students. Approximately seventy parents and relatives came to hear the visiting students describe their experiences in the North. Baker was quick to note the recurring theme of the students' remarks: though shocking at first, when it is lived, integration quickly becomes familiar and unsurprising. Club members hosted monthly Sunday afternoon discussion groups on teenage issues and parenting techniques, corresponded with students and host parents, sponsored a baseball league, read and discussed black history and the meaning of citizenship, and occasionally joined Baker's Leadership Institute for special programs. The January 1961 meeting focused on appropriate allowances, a topic sparked by the children's recent return for Christmas with tales of significantly different amounts of pocket money. Residing as they did in a town with no public transportation and few opportunities to spend money, few parents ever considered the concept of an allowance for their children. The realities of urban and suburban life and the experiences of their new friends and host siblings, however, led most of the teenagers to view spending money as a absolute necessity. In May, the club discussed potential coming-home problems and made plans for organizing summer activities for the children.[315]

Well-loved by the young people, Baker also wrote personal own letters to the students. Full of cheerful news from home and accounts of placed children in other

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[315] Helen Baker to Fairfax, 5 January 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Prince Edward County Emergency Project, 27 February 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU; AFSC Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia Progress Report, 9 March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Baker to Fairfax and Wil Hartzler, 27 January 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid; American Friends Service Committee, "Prince Edward County Emergency Project Report," August 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38173, ibid.

communities' activities, her notes reflected her sincere, intensely personal concern for their welfare. Upon learning that a significant number of parents – both biological and host – were unsure how the children felt about their new situations, she wrote a letter acknowledging the need to be "cool," yet reminding the teenagers of the importance of talking with their parents and host families about their feelings. Reminding them of the concern of the adults around them, she commented that, "All they want is to feel that what they are doing makes you happy and is the best thing they can arrange for your development."[316]

Parents of placement students frequented the AFSC office in the Miller Building as a source of information, resources, support and empathy. One day in early January 1961, no less than seven parents/guardians stopped by to see Baker. Moses Scott's mother came to see if any of the donated clothes would fit her son, while Geneva Botts stopped by to announce that Barbara had written President Kennedy a letter detailing the impact of the closings upon the children of the county. Tommy Hunter's mother came to return her son's bus ticket to Dayton; unable to adjust, he decided not to return to Ohio at the end of Christmas break. Dorothy Croner brought Lena Evans' parents regrets that their daughter had chosen to marry rather than return to her placement. Lucille Reid dropped by to say that her grandsons Oscar and William "want to be educated in the West," and Minnie Wiley stopped in to chat. Harriet Allen came by to discuss her concern that her son Jimmy's host family resented his incessant smoking. It is interesting to note that a good number of these individuals stopped by merely to chat or share some new development in their child's life. Clearly, many parents embraced the organization

[316] Baker to Placement Students, 29 January 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38172, ibid.

that had taken such an interest in their children and regarded its community relations director as both a friend and a genuine member of the black community.[317]

The Original Sponsoring Communities

A sincere desire to help the Prince Edward children linked the ten host communities pioneering the project in 1960, despite their diversity in geography, culture, racial composition, financial stability and experiences. The sponsoring committees in Dayton, Kalamazoo, and Moorestown prevailed upon their local school boards to waive tuition for the Prince Edward students. The Yellow Springs school district charged $180 per year for each student, and Iowa City $640 per year, placing a significant financial burden on the local sponsoring committees and the Dayton and Des Moines Regional Offices. Costs in Iowa City costs ran so high that the committee appealed to the AFSC National Office to advance part of the tuition money. In Baltimore, after gauging the mood of the city school board, the sponsoring committee concluded that assuming the responsibility to raise tuition was ultimately preferable to engaging in a lengthy battle with district officials.[318]

The two Michigan communities embarked on sponsorship from diametrically opposed financial positions. Thanks to a $1500 grant from a local foundation and

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[317] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 10 January 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 27 January 1961, ibid.

[318] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 2-3, 9, 12, 13-14, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

marked success in collecting funds from other sources, Kalamazoo's financial stability exceeded that of all the other committees. Host families received a subsidy of thirty dollars a month and provided each child an additional five dollars monthly in spending money. Ironically, the three students placed in Kalamazoo came from comparatively more secure economic backgrounds than the majority of placement students - from families more likely to be able to contribute to their children's maintenance.[319]

Finances in Inkster, on the other hand, were dangerously tight. Not awarded its charter from the state (necessary under Michigan law in order to legally solicit funds) until mid-September, the committee began the school year without any money in the treasury. The presence of two children so seriously economically disadvantaged that they could not attend school until certain clothing needs were met strained the committee's resources still further. Fortunately, committee members' fundraising strategy, which included announcements in church bulletins and widely distributed letters of solicitation, ultimately proved successful enough to keep the project afloat. A suburb of Detroit, Inkster was a predominately African American community with a small, recent and residentially segregated white population. Committee members included the neighboring white suburbs of Dearborn and Livonia in their fundraising campaign and drew significant amusement from receiving a pool of cash they termed "conscience money" in return.[320]

Though concerned that the community's majority black population and lack of familiarity with the AFSC and its mission would impede its ability to provide the children

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[319] Ibid, p. 9.

[320] Ibid, p. 7; Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

adequate interracial and cultural experiences, staff members chose to focus instead on the positives. Inspired by AFSC ideals, some committee members embraced interracial activity planning in hopes that working together with white residents to support the children might serve as a first step in bringing together a racially divided community. Furthermore, African Americans filled the majority of posts in Inkster's municipal government, offering the Prince Edward children an opportunity to see individuals of their own race in positions of power. Ultimately, however, staff members derived the bulk of their encouragement from the perpetual enthusiasm of the committee members themselves. Inkster drew a group of children with unusually severe problems: a kleptomaniac boy who was quickly sent home, two girls with serious health problems, a boy with a record of delinquency, and a physically mature young woman unused to adult supervision. Yet instead of criticizing the AFSC's selection process, committee members thanked the Quakers for entrusting them with children who needed help so badly.[321]

Media and Lansdowne/Yeadon committee members found their lives inordinately complicated by a Pennsylvania statute requiring the posting of indemnity bonds of $1000 for every minor brought into the state to live with non-relatives. They also waded through conflicting policies on the question of non-resident children's entitlement to free public education. When the state Attorney General ruled that school tuition would be waived on the condition that host families assumed financial responsibility for their guests, sponsoring committees found themselves with a new headache. They had promised some host families supplemental allowances that now had to be distributed in a

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[321] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 6-7, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid; Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

manner that did not defy the Attorney General's ruling. Both committees also struggled with the thorny issue of race. The Media committee was substantially interracial, but when a white family expressed interest in hosting a student, African American members opposed the suggestion. Lansdowne/Yeadon started off with a large and dynamic committee of twenty-six, split equally between black and white members, but as work progressed, white attendance dropped dramatically. White committee members interpreted this pattern as a positive indication that the black community had assumed leadership of the project. African Americans, however, found the events disappointing, criticizing the white community for not providing the sort of cooperation for which they had hoped.[322]

On the other hand, staff members praised the Iowa City committee for its enthusiastic and proactive approach to interracialism. A city of 27,000, Iowa City contained only ten black families, and the high school attended by the three Prince Edward boys enrolled only two other African Americans. Concerned that the boys not feel overwhelmed by whiteness, committee members forged contacts with teenage groups in the Cedar Rapids black community and arranged for their guests to visit the Prince Edward students attending nearby Scattergood School. A spirit of respect and affection characterized relationships between host families and students, as reflected in Otis Wiley's 2003 reminiscence that his white host parents "were the most wonderful people I had ever met. They treated me as though they had birthed me themselves, [sic] which

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[322] Florence Kulp, Importation Program Supervisor, Pennsylvania Bureau of Family and Child Welfare, to Moffett, 6 September 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38141, ibid; Harry Sprogell, Law Offices of Saul, Ewing, Remick, and Saul, Memo, 22 September 1960, ibid; Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 15-16, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

made my adjusting to being away from home less painful." Staff also applauded Dayton's decision to use both black and white host families, commitment to placing the children in integrated schools, and regular interracial/intercultural activities. Students in the Dayton project attended parties at a local synagogue, interacted with members of the city's Unitarian Church, and received numerous social invitations from local groups.[323]

Nevertheless, no committee or community received as much praise from the AFSC as did Yellow Springs, Ohio, the first community to volunteer for the project. The interracial sponsoring community selected three black families and three white ones to serve as hosts and purchased bicycles for the children to allow them to explore the town on their own before classes began. A diverse, politically active community, home to Antioch College and close to the historically black Wilberforce College, Yellow Springs contained little residential segregation. Substantial integration characterized the public school system and Bryan High, which enrolled four of the five Prince Edward students, included among its population fifty-six students of non-U.S. background. This diversity prompted Yellow Springs teenagers to easily accept new students regardless of their ethnic or racial background. The six host families interacted quite a bit and Morisey noted that,

> All of the students here are exceptionally well adjusted...My interviews with [them] revealed an unusual awareness of political and social problems and a much stronger sense of identification with the world about them than is general with the

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[323] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 2, 10, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid; Otis Wiley, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Prince Edward County students. This is probably due to the kind of community they are living in.[324]

On the other hand, staff members perceived "an extreme self consciousness on the question of race" in the Kalamazoo committee. With the exception of a white chairman, Dr. Chester Hunt, a professor of sociology at Western Michigan University, committee members were all black and fairly economically homogenous. Juanita Morisey returned from a visit to Kalamazoo in September 1960 with the impression that decisions about whom to select to serve as host families, committee members, and project counselor had been ultimately determined on the basis of race. When combined with a conscious committee decision to match students with host families from similar socio-economic backgrounds, this approach led Morisey to suggest that "this community needs to be especially conscious of its responsibilities to enrich the cultural experience of the students."[325]

Staff members worried that the Moorestown committee, though vigorous, was insufficiently interracial. Nevertheless, they applauded its decision, after much background research and discussion, to enroll one of the seven students placed in the community in the Moorestown Friends School. Though the elementary school previously included black students, Prince Edward's Samuel Cobbs became the first African American in the high school department. Faculty and school committee members rallied to the project: raising tuition money and securing special tutoring and counseling services

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[324] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 4-5, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid; Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

[325] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 8-9, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

for the new student. Cobbs graduated in 1962 as Moorestown Friends' first black alumnus, went on to earn a B.A. and an M.A. in Education, taught in the Virginia public schools for thirty-five years, and retired in 2001. During his stay in Moorestown, he spent the first year and a half with a childless black couple, Clarence and Ruth Baylor, and the last four months with a different family each month, three of whom were white.[326]

Forty years later, he remained in touch with the Baylors' and recalled with fondness the weekly Quaker meetings he attended at Moorestown Friends. In a questionnaire filled out in 2003, Cobbs reflected that the lasting impact of his experience with the placement program was twofold. "I feel that I received a quality education from MFS which enabled me to complete my bachelor's degree in four years and subsequently a masters degree two years later," he wrote, noting elsewhere that, "The lasting impact on my life is the fact that I can easily adapt to new, different and often unique situations successfully."[327]

Moses Scott fondly remembered his first night in Moorestown. Upon arriving at his host mother's home, "she invited me in as if I were a son returning home." Profoundly touched by his experience with a woman he termed "a living angel," he remained in contact with her until her death in the mid-1980's, at which time her family requested him to speak at the funeral. Scott's esteem for the broader Moorestown community also endured for a lifetime. As he recalled in 2003, "I will always remember

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[326] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 14-15, ibid; Samuel Cobbs, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[327] Cobbs, Response to Questionnaire.

the Moorestown community, including people of all races and religions, as being a very caring and nurturing community. I did not experience one single incident of disrespect."[328]

As the most southern community in the project, the Baltimore committee found it particularly difficult to provide its five students an experience that differed significantly from what they had known in Prince Edward County. School desegregation was still a new phenomenon in Baltimore and residential and social patterns were generally segregated. Despite the clear interracial inclinations of most of the committee leadership, members struggled at first to decide whether a student could have a good interracial experience in Baltimore. Eventually, they took the plunge, arranged for the majority to attend integrated schools and placed one student with a white host family. Nonetheless, the obvious racial bifurcation of society caused the majority of placement students to note that Baltimore was in many ways similar to home.[329]

The student placed with a white family had an unusual and stretching experience. "It was hard for me at first to adjust because I had to get used to staying with a white family," he told Robert Green a few years later. "Nothing like this had ever happened to me in Prince Edward County, where Negroes just didn't stay that close to white people, and I felt rather strange about it at first." The stares of some of his black classmates, who did not know what to make of a black Virginia Baptist who lived with white Quakers,

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[328] Moses Scott, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[329] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 13, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box. Folder 38132, ibid.

reinforced the strangeness. Residing in an all-white neighborhood, he was particularly attuned to the variety of responses his presence received from neighbors. The younger children tended to be aloof at first, but became friendly as they got to know him. He and Sue, the girl next door, interacted awkwardly at first, but eventually forged a genuine friendship that flouted traditional racial conventions. Many of the adults, however, never fully reconciled themselves to the presence of a black outsider in their midst. Though some families embraced him, often engaging his services as a babysitter, he remained cognizant that many of the neighborhood adults "were old Southern people, and they did not really like me very much, possibly because I was friends with a white girl and I guess they just couldn't understand or accept this. They were polite, but that was all." No doubt many deeply resented their Quaker neighbors' decision to cross the color line. Interestingly enough, however, none made any overt threats against the young man or his hosts or visibly interfered in his friendship with Sue. Perhaps knowledge of the temporary nature of the placement stayed the hand of some of the neighborhood's more devoted segregationists. Respect for his hosts and for Sue's family or concern for maintaining the appearance of middle/upper class civility might have also contributed to the quiescence.[330]

Despite the veiled hostility of some of the neighbors, the young man adored his host family, who had a zest for travel and took a trip almost every weekend. He accompanied them camping, to California and Kansas to visit relatives, to New York City, to Quaker meeting, and to a variety of historic sites around Baltimore, all new experiences that brought him great delight. A year later, on the eve of his high school

[330] Green et al, p. 195-197.

graduation, he told researcher Robert Green that his Baltimore family literally changed his life:

> They kind of softened me up, and helped me and made me want to help someone else in turn. I don't know just what it was, but they did something to me that has changed my outlook. I was a bit 'hard headed' before, and usually thought more of myself than of anyone else. But their helping me made me see that it is good to help other people too. Going away to school and staying with this family was the greatest thing that ever happened to me.

In explaining his desire to join the Peace Corps after completing a training program in electronics and go to India to work in agriculture and human relations, he credited his host family with inspiring the dream. He also vowed that the color consciousness endemic to his life in Virginia evaporated in Baltimore. "The only time I really thought about color was when we were traveling," he commented. "Sometimes strangers would stare at us and this reminded me again that I was a Negro. I was never made to feel that way by the family, though."[331]

In 1961, the Baltimore project moved into a new phase: providing a special education placement for a young man originally placed at Scattergood School, a Quaker boarding school in Iowa. While at Scattergood, teachers identified him as special education, and due to his interest in electronics, project organizers decided that he might thrive in a vocational school environment. AFSC staff relocated the 1960-1961 Baltimore children who decided to continue on with the program to other communities, and the committee turned its attention to raising the $920 required to enroll the young man at George Washington Carver Vocational School and provide his room and board.[332]

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[331] Ibid, p. 196-197.

[332] Marjorie Scott to Friends, 16 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38439, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Fairfax to Marjorie Scott, 18 June 1962, ibid.

After finishing his junior year, Baltimore's new student chose to remain in the city for the summer, took a job, and used his wages to pay his graduation fees and take care of his own personal and travel expenses. Helen Baker, a native of Baltimore who played a prominent role on the city's sponsoring committee after leaving Prince Edward County in August 1961, searched diligently to find a good placement for his final year of the program. After much deliberation, Baker moved the boy to the home of Preston and Verna Waters because Mr. Waters shared his guest's passion for electronics. AFSC staff members raved over the young man's educational and social maturation. Marie Turner noted in late September 1962 that, "I know he benefited from being in Baltimore last year. The words he used in a form he filled out made me feel a whole new world had opened up for him."[333]

The boy's parents welcomed their son's opportunity to remain in the city, writing the committee chairman that they could not imagine what he would have done over the summer if he had returned to Prince Edward, for, in concise summation of rural poverty, "there is not any work here for the peoples that live here regularly." His mother, once described by Helen Baker as "unquestionably the most enthusiastic person that I have met anywhere in months," also wrote the AFSC's Marie Turner to express her profound gratitude for the organization's devotion to her son and explain the reason why another family had not yet paid the balance of their daughter's bus ticket from the Christmas holidays. "They have had it very tough this winter and that is the reason for

[333] Fairfax to Scott, 14 August 1962, ibid; Moffett to Fairfax and Marie Turner, 7 September 1962, ibid; Turner to Scott, 21 September 1962, ibid.

the delay," she noted. "[They] thank you very, very much for seeing to her getting an education. Because they were not able to pay for her to go to school."[334]

Problems, Complications, and Complexities

As might be expected in any project involving large groups of people, unusual and unexpected problems presented themselves. Staff members intervened in Lansdowne/Yeadon when committee members violated student privacy through public discussion of participants' personal and academic problems. They reined in the Iowa City committee when its genuine concern for the children's welfare slipped to the border of over-zealousness. Predominantly comprised of individuals connected to the University of Iowa, the committee tended to overact to minor problems. In September 1960, it boasted more counselors than students. Staff members worried that the sponsoring committee unintentionally snowed under host families, "overwhelming them in expert opinion and not allowing them enough latitude in decision making."[335]

Morisey noted that "while there is no doubt that this interest is valuable and must be maintained, my feeling is that they are looking under the rug for problems." In its disproportional response to minor adjustment problems, the committee fell into Lansdowne/Yeadon's pattern of discussing student problems in public forums. With Morisey's prodding, members identified the source of the problem: accustomed to the established procedures of foster care placement, many of the experienced social workers

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[334] Minnie Wiley to Friend (Marjorie Scott), 1 June 1962, ibid; Minnie Wiley to Marie Turner, 1 June 1962, ibid.

[335] Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 16-17, 10-12, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, ibid.

on the committee failed to recognize that the AFSC program and the participating children did not fit this model of operation. Once aware of its' own improper frame of reference, the committee adjusted accordingly and the issue blew over. Many of the relationships forged between children and host families in Iowa City proved long-lasting. One student continued to receive annual Christmas and birthday gifts from his host family for over forty years.[336]

A more serious problem presented itself in Kalamazoo, in the form of counselor George Roberts, the city's recently hired Director of Community Relations, appointed to the committee at the request of the Kalamazoo Commission on Race Relations. Roberts' appointment unnerved Juanita Morisey, who worried that he might find it difficult to untangle his counseling role from his municipal responsibilities and resist any attempts on part of his supervisors to influence the project. In December 1960, she noted that Roberts manifested a "very rigid and authoritarian attitude in relationship to the students and other persons in the community," strictly controlling committee finances and instructing host families and students that no social invitations might be accepted without his permission. When requested, he denied more requests than he approved. Apparently convinced that the children should not be offered activities which might take their attention away from school, he repeatedly rebuffed friendly community groups who sought to follow AFSC's suggestion that the students be provided interracial activity and cultural experiences. Committee members, host families, students, and staff members alike resented Roberts' rigidity. Once aware of the problem, Morisey immediately wrote

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[336] Ibid; James E. Lee, Jr., Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

the counselor "a rather brisk letter" suggesting he relax his attitudes. She also went out of her way to encourage regular meetings of the full committee and assure host families that they had every right to accept any invitations they should deem desirable.[337]

Her investigation into the problem never fully answered her question of whether the root of the problem lay in an attempt by Roberts' supervisors to exert municipal control over the project or whether the counselor himself simply possessed an overly aggressive personality. Yet despite the awkwardness of the conflict, the controversy did accord an opportunity to respond to an undercurrent of resentment on part of many influential citizens. Leading members of the community spent the fall openly criticizing AFSC for not stepping out of the picture after placing the children. The discontent provided Morisey a public platform to remind the dissatisfied that AFSC had assumed responsibility for the children and been endowed with the trust of their parents. In addition to its accountability to the students' parents, AFSC also carried insurance on the participants. As the responsible party in case of an unfortunate incident, it reasonably considered a minimum of oversight over the project necessary.[338]

A problem cutting across communities was a sense of loneliness and alienation at being ripped away from home and family by forces beyond the children's control. Though all participants freely chose to participate in the project, some cherished a burning resentment toward the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors for robbing them of the opportunity to pursue their high school education at home like the rest of the adolescent population of the United States. While some embraced the new life

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[337] Morisey to Moffett, 2 December 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[338] Ibid.

surrounding them with great enthusiasm, others struggled with the parting from friends and family. Forty years later, John Hicks, one of the Baltimore students, remembered "crying many nights trying to make the adjustments to being away from my family." Though involved in basketball and track, and comfortable with his host parents and three host brothers, his loneliness did not abate with time. He wrote his family every week and took the bus to Farmville every holiday. When the school year came to a close, Hicks' parents arranged for him to stay with his grandmother in New Jersey the following year. The presence of other family members made this placement easier and he remained in New Jersey until his high school graduation in 1963.[339]

One of the female students waged an intensely personal struggle with a pervading sense of not belonging. Despite her tendency to put the best face on things and her desire to return for a third year in the program, certain aspects of her experience bothered her deeply. "I hate to be a great responsibility to anyone," she wrote Jean Fairfax in the summer of 1962. "And I always felt that I caused the families inconveniences that they would not have had had I not been there." Few students left written record of similar feelings, but there is cause to wonder whether others struggled with feelings of guilt or resentment at being forced into depending upon others to provide for their basic needs.[340]

Some placements proved problematic. Some children and host families proved a poor match; while in other cases the initial impressions of the social workers and staff

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[339] LaNae Johnson, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Phyllistine Ward Mosley, ibid; Otis Wiley, ibid; Samuel Cobbs, ibid; John J. Hicks, ibid.

[340] Barbara Botts, Response to Questionnaire, 10 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38620, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

members who selected host families misjudged the situation in a home. An older black couple initially perceived as expansive and warm proved to be highly problematic as host parents. Members of the local sponsoring committee soon discovered that the host mother had "strong segregationist sentiments," that the father possessed little enthusiasm for hosting Prince Edward students, and that the home lacked intellectual and cultural nurture. Committee member Lindo Ferrini noted that:

> The host mother, unaware of her own educational and other limitations, regards herself as the definitive authority on almost any subject...She shows strong preference for dependent, grateful, rather submissive people. Her giving is accompanied by endless reminders of the gratitude the recipients should feel.[341]

The two boys in her home resented her open belittling of their own families, her highly critical and negative nature, her strict supervision of their activities, her tendency to eavesdrop on their phone conversations, and her insistence upon reading their mail. Irritated by her refusal to allow them to visit people she did not know or attend the parties given for the Prince Edward students, they justifiably felt that they "did not have the opportunities which the other children from Prince Edward had to get around to meet people." Lindo Ferrini twice offered to move the boys to another home, but both refused to change residences in the middle of the year. He suspected that they preferred the difficulty of the familiar to the anxiety of the unknown. Both boarded the bus to Farmville within hours of the close of school. Yet despite their experience, they chose to remain with the program another year. One returned to a different home in the same community and the other requested transfer to the new Greater Boston project. Both

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[341] Untitled Note, n.d., Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Lindo Ferrini, Summary, 10 July 1962, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

experienced positive situations in their new homes and one remains in touch with his second-year host family to this day.[342]

AFSC staff and sponsoring committee members took on quasi-parental attitudes toward the young people in their care, worrying over their grades, emotional health, future plans, and peer group influences. Though maintaining high standards of confidentiality, when worried about specific situations, staff and committee members corresponded regularly about how to best handle the problem. They confronted officials at Cambridge High School when concerned that teachers and counselors were counseling a student "into acceptance of his limitations as they see them, rather than challenging him." They took concrete action to assuage the feelings of abandonment and rejection so pronounced in a girl who enjoyed a close relationship with her 1961-62 host family, but found herself relocated for the 1962-63 school year. Upon learning of Moses Scott's homesickness for Moorestown, they explained the financial reasons necessitating his reassignment to Newton and revealed that they had deliberately placed him in a large high school in order to help fulfill his goal of attending a top-rated college.[343]

When one of the girls developed feelings for "a young man in the community whom the committee does not regard as the best type of companion," members jumped in

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[342] Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Fairfax to Chester Gibbs, 28 August 1962, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Carlton Terry, Response to Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[343] Boston Committee for Placement of Prince Edward County Children, "Report of Evaluation Sub-Committee," 6 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Fairfax to Richard Hiler, 18 May 1962, ibid; Fairfax to Gibbs, 6 October 1962, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Fairfax to Lindo Ferrini, 24 October 1962, ibid; Fairfax to Jean Mason, 19 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

to steer her interests in other directions. When another stopped off on her way back to her placement after Christmas break to visit her aunt without notifying anyone, the chairman of her sponsoring committee reacted like a mother. Once over her profound annoyance, she wrote Jean Fairfax for more information about the aunt: "Is she a proper person for [the student] to visit?" AFSC representatives, particularly Helen Baker, worked hard throughout early 1963 to remind a graduate of the Iowa City project that while enrolled in the program, he expressed the desire to attend college. Fretting that the "listless influences" of his home life had sapped his ambition, they attempted to convince him that as "man of the house," he needed to attain as much education as possible.[344]

Ultimately, however, staff members expended their greatest concern on the familial tragedy surrounding the gregarious and adaptable Raymond Wiley, who while in the program unexpectedly lost both his mother and father within the space of six weeks. Raymond's host family rallied round him, accompanying him to his mother's funeral and "doing everything in our power to help [him] through this trying period." Though Jewish themselves, they worked with staff and committee members to give him a nice Christmas. Declining an opportunity to spend the holiday in Virginia with his siblings, Raymond spent much of his school vacation participating in recreational programs at his host city's Jewish Community Center. His host mother, Bea Weissman, however, recognized that her and her husband's sincere affection and sympathy could not substitute for the empathy of a peer. She thus considered the presence of another placement student in their home positively providential, noting that, "It is fortunate that Rudolph is here as

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[344] Ruth Batson to Fairfax, 17 January 1963, Greater Boston Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Turner to Baker, 5 February 1963, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, VSU.

well, for it seems they are now friendlier than ever." AFSC staff visited Raymond's older siblings in Virginia, secured their permission for him to remain in the program for the remainder of the school year, contacted his aunt in California to discuss his future, wrote him sympathetic and encouraging letters and worried a great deal over what would become of him. Well into their second year together, Raymond and the Weissmans already possessed a close relationship, but the double tragedy solidified the bonds even further. These urban white Jews became the black Baptist boy's second family and they remained in contact for years. When Jean Fairfax saw Henry Weissman at a civil rights meeting in New York City many years later, he reported that his family's relationship with Raymond continued to thrive.[345]

The Final Three Communities

Despite the expected presence of some problems and concerns, such as those discussed above, at the end of the first year, students, parents, sponsoring committees and staff alike all deemed the program a success. Commitments and responsibilities expired in June, for all parties involved assumed in setting up the program that the Prince Edward schools would reopen before September 1961. Around the middle of August, parents, students and staff members relinquished their last faint hopes that a legal solution would come in time to save the 1961-62 school year. Desperation set in and AFSC staff

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[345] Bea Weissman to Fairfax, 7 December 1962, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Fairfax to Minnie Miller, 20 November 1962, ibid; Fairfax to Gibbs, 17 December 1962, ibid; Fairfax, AFSC Prince Edward County Program, 16 February 2002, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963." p. 27.

members scrambled to reactivate the placement program. Jean Fairfax noted in a 2002 retrospective that she would never forget the day the last breath of hope expired:

> I was surrounded by desperate parents who crowded into our little office in the Miller Building with pleas for help in making school placements for their children. We had alerted the communities where students had been placed in 1960-61 that the crisis might continue and had received mixed responses. We were faced with the need to find new communities just a few weeks before the beginning of the fall term and were reluctant to burden the regional offices that had done such a tremendous job in locating host communities in 1960. I am not a person who thinks in traditional religious terms. But I definitely remember saying privately, "Lord, you got me into this mess; now show me a way out!"[346]

Fairfax's primary concern did not lay with program veterans, for the majority of the 1960-61 communities readily agreed to continue to support the children AFSC recommended for a second year of placement. Sensitive to a shrinking national office budget and the realities of asking existing sponsoring committees to unexpectedly continue their efforts for another year, staff members carefully reviewed the records of all participants before recommending their continuance in the program. Those eligible to graduate in June 1962 received first priority, followed by those who maintained a "C" average and displayed adequate social adjustment throughout the first year of the program. Not all who failed to maintain a "C" average were excluded – organizers continued some students who had tried valiantly but struggled academically - yet on the whole, logistical and financial constraints rendered the second year's program more selective than the first.[347]

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[346] Jean Fairfax, AFSC Prince Edward County Program, 16 February 2002, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[347] Fairfax to Robert Lyon, 15 September 1961, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Baker to the Prince Edward Black Community, 19 July 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38178, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Her concern lay, rather, with those whose parents "made do" from 1959-1961, but reacted with panic at the thought of yet another year of interrupted schooling, and those who demonstrated significant academic potential in the VTA's summer "crash program," but had no plans for the 1961-62 school year. Faced with desperate need and nearly impossible time constraints, Fairfax threw herself upon the bonds of personal friendship, turning to social justice-minded friends in Springfield, Massachusetts and Berea, Kentucky. They came through in organizing their communities, ultimately enabling her to offer thirty-six children placements for 1961-62.[348]

Within a few days, Hans and Eleanor Spiegel, old friends from the Foreign Service residing in Springfield thanks to Hans' faculty position at Springfield College, banded together with Chester Gibbs of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, Lindo Ferrini of the Children's Study Home, and Robert Poole of Children and Family Services. They assembled a team of five social workers that rapidly located host families and arranged placements for nine children. A few weeks later, a thirty-five member Citizens Committee to Aid Students of Prince Edward County, Virginia began a fund-raising campaign. Committee members wrote letters of solicitation to every local church listed with the National Council of Churches and a select list of individuals and organizations, and handled contacts with local school committees. Organizers placed the students in three different districts, all of which agreed to accept them despite crowded conditions. The Holyoke Public Schools waived tuition and West Springfield raised the necessary funds through a special drive heavily supported by the teachers' association. The Springfield School Committee, on the other

[348] Ibid.

hand, audaciously billed the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors $1636.26 in tuition costs, but allowed the four students to enroll despite the Board's response: a resolution stating its refusal to pay.[349]

During Greater Springfield's two years in the program (1961-1963), seven families – five black and two white – served as hosts. In agreeing to accept children of any age, the Springfield project eased the minds of AFSC staff members increasingly disturbed by the dearth of opportunities for placement available to junior high students. Kittrell served only upper-division students, the afore-mentioned Washington, DC project targeted elementary school children, and the new placement at Berea College Foundation School required students over age fifteen. Fairfax worried that watching their older peers leave the county had provided many of the younger adolescents "an increasing sense that life is passing them by," an attitude that if left unaddressed could quickly disintegrate into hopelessness or rebellion.[350]

Two of the female students selected for Springfield stood out in the VTA program for their intellectual capacity. One possessed potential as a leader, but without constructive opportunity to use her talents in Farmville, held a reputation "of being a rather sassy sort." Armed with their standardized test scores, courtesy of the VTA, and a long list of arguments and considerations, Fairfax set out to convince the girls' parents to

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[349] Fairfax, Memo to Community Relations Program Committee, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38173, ibid; Citizens' Committee to Aid Students of Prince Edward County, "The Nine Virginia Children Attending School Here!," n.d., Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Community Relations Program, "Notes from Meeting with Chester Gibbs," 17 July 1962, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 6 February 1962, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse.

[350] Fairfax to Lyon, 15 September 1961, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

allow them to join the AFSC program. One mother gave her permission immediately, while the other required a great deal of persuasion, but agreed in the end. Four students entered the program at the request of their parents, while two more joined the group toward the end of the selection process due primarily to their eagerness to get into school and Fairfax's desire to get them out a home environment she deemed "poor and unwholesome."[351]

The final member of the group was the younger brother of a former placement student who greatly annoyed staff members by expressing his refusal to return to his placement after the Christmas holidays in a particularly immature manner. Despite his oft-articulated desire for placement and subsequent haunting of the AFSC office, Fairfax gave the boy no encouragement until he trailed her home at 11:00 PM her last night in Farmville, seeking information about any new placement opportunities. When she turned up on his doorstep early the following morning to ask if he could be ready to leave by evening, he accepted without hesitation. Once in Springfield, the same determination, enthusiasm and leadership skills earned him the vice-presidency of his seventh grade class.[352]

Several of the Springfield students enjoyed particularly positive interracial experiences. Raymond Wiley and Rudolph Stokes, the Weissmans' guests, actively participated in activities at the largely white Springfield Jewish Community Center and

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[351] Ibid.

[352] Ibid; Juanita Griffin, "Negro Boys from Virginia Left Fond Memories Here," *Springfield Republican*, n.d., clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; "School Days Ending Here for 6 Virginia Pupils: Integrated Experience Brings Changed Outlook," *Springfield Union News,* 21 June 1963, clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

spent time with their host brother Malcolm and his friends. A white Quaker volunteer chauffered them to a Baptist church each week for Sunday service. Months after the boys' departure, Bea Weissman fondly recalled the interfaith and interracial aspects of the previous Passover. Malcolm's older brother Steven brought two friends home from college for the holiday, rounding out a truly diverse Seder table consisting of two blacks and six whites: two Baptists, four Jews, one Catholic, and one Lutheran.[353]

Raymond's first days in Springfield, however, offered him one disorienting and frightening experience after another. Immediately upon stepping off the bus, he learned that he would be living with a white family. Upon reaching the Weissmans' home, he discovered a living room full of white teenagers recruited as a welcoming committee by sixteen year old Malcolm. "That just made me more shaky," he recalled later. "I could see that they wanted to be friendly, and I shook hands with everybody and tried to look like I was having a good time, but I was just plain scared." By their mid-teens, white and black youth no longer mixed socially in Prince Edward County. Many of their encounters – particularly when one group significantly outnumbered the other – centered around intimidation and confrontation. Facing a large group of unfamiliar white boys alone could hardly have avoided stirring feelings of fear in a teenager born and raised under Jim Crow. Determined to help Raymond break the racial codes that constrained his behavior, the Weissmans shortened their strides when their guest instinctively fell into step behind them on public streets and begged him to address them by their first names. Though their genuine friendliness eventually won Raymond's trust, allowing him to relax

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[353] Juanita Griffin, "Negro Boys from Virginia Left Fond Memories Here," *Springfield Republican*, n.d., clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

in their presence and grow more comfortable with white people, their initial actions rather overwhelmed him, possibly making a difficult transition even more confusing.[354]

James Edwards, Jr., who lived with an African American funeral director and his wife, found integration surprising in other ways. Amazed and flattered when a white classmate asked him to take her to the junior prom, he nevertheless declined in favor of an African American friend. When one of his white school friends moved to New Jersey, his family invited James to come down for a weekend, brushing aside southern racial conventions regarding sharing meals and bathroom facilities. One of the Springfield boys told a reporter for one of the city newspapers that "about 45% of my friends up here have been white," while the adaptable Ray Wiley noted that throughout his two years in Massachusetts, his feelings toward his white schoolmates shifted from terror to companionship.[355]

The Berea project, which enrolled six students during 1961-62 and four the following year, possessed a distinctly unique flavor. Like many rural institutions, Kentucky's Berea College included a high school department known as Berea College Foundation School. Established in 1910 to provide a four-year high school education to rural youth seeking more extensive coursework than they could get in their district schools, the Foundation School boarded students from across the Appalachian region.

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[354] "Adjustment of Negro Pupil from South to Northern Ways Has Been Cautious," clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[355] "School Days Ending Here for 6 Virginia Pupils: Integrated Experience Brings Changed Outlook." *Springfield Union News,* 21 June 1963, clipping. Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; "Segregation Victims Describe Feelings In Coming North to Continue School," *Springfield Union News,* December 1961, clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

The Prince Edward students joined the majority white enrollment, living for the first time in close quarters with whites their own age. As one of the female students noted, "Most of the girls in the dorm were white, and we all went around together; this was very much different than it is in Prince Edward County." Living in a boarding school setting rather than in family homes, the Berea students became part of the camaraderie of a dormitory full of young people – midnight slumber parties, dorm trips, dances in the basement, athletic events, dinner parties in the Dean's apartment, etc. Elsie Mae Robinson became president of her dormitory during her second year and served on the Student Executive Social Committee, summing up her experiences by stating simply that, "The greatest thing that happened to me while I was away at school was being in so many activities where I had never been before when I was in the county."[356]

Berea's interracial amity flew in the face of the culture of the Kentucky hills surrounding the campus. But Berea College possessed a unique history and distinctive mission that made the school an exceptionally good fit for the Prince Edward students. In establishing the school in 1855 along the lines of Ohio's Oberlin College, the founders – Rev. John Fee and gradual abolitionist Cassius Clay – envisioned an institution that would serve the educational needs of Appalachian whites, freed slaves, and the mulatto offspring of southern planters. The first coeducational, interracial college in the South, Berea continued to enroll a student body split evenly between black and white until the Kentucky state legislature passed the Day Law in 1904, banning interracial instruction. The state action constituted a direct strike at the college, which made national headlines

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[356] Brinson: 21-25; Fairfax to William Hayden, 4 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38440, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Green et al, p. 202; Elisabeth S. Peck, *Berea's First 125 Years: 1855-1980* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982): 91, 201.

in 1908 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that despite Berea's status as the private institution, the state possessed the right under corporate charter law to dictate its racial composition. One of the most narrowly contrived decisions ever issued by the Court, the extremism of *Berea College v. Kentucky*[357] outweighed even *Plessy v. Ferguson*[358], which despite its pernicious impact, at least suggested that governments held no legal right to interfere with integration developing through the "voluntary consent of individuals."[359]

Bowing to the Court, Berea transferred its more advanced black students to schools such as Fisk, Tuskegee, and Kentucky State Institute for Negroes, covering the financial difference in railroad fare and living expenses incurred by the move, directed funds toward the establishment of Lincoln Institute, a new school for blacks outside Louisville and redoubled its efforts on part of Appalachian whites. It did, however, work around the letter of the law by regularly bringing black speakers and musicians to campus, hosting regional interracial conferences, and donating land for a black elementary school. When the state legislature amended the Day Law in 1950 to allow integration at the collegiate level, the college became the first in Kentucky to reopen its doors to black students. Primarily committed to providing an education for the economically disadvantaged youth of the Appalachian region, Berea offered a flourishing work-study program that furnished job opportunities for the vast majority of students,

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[357] 211 U.S. 45 (1908).

[358] 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

[359] Klarman, p. 25-26. See Peck, p. 49-54. For more on Berea's early days, see also Richard D. Sears, *A Utopian Experiment in Kentucky: Integration and Social Equality at Berea, 1866-1904* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.)

collegiate and pre-collegiate alike. Founded at the ebb of the "manual training" movement in American education, the work program was less an attempt to dignify labor than a deliberate strategy to allow impoverished students to cover a significant portion of their educational expenses.[360]

Cost of a Foundation School education averaged approximately $500 per year for each of the Prince Edward students, all of whom joined the work program, serving as dormitory hostesses and clocking hours in the candy kitchen, bakery, broom factory, and weaving shop. Since their families could send them very little cash, they devoted the majority of their earnings toward buying their own books and necessities, but most still attempted to save as much as possible for tuition costs. Doris and Elsie Mae Robinson, sisters who shared a dorm room, wrote Jean Fairfax in spring 1962 that the five Prince Edward girls hoped to get summer jobs and send AFSC payments every week or two "to pay at least part of the money back that you have paid for our schooling." Their families at home possessed a similar level of determination; their letters to AFSC staff members reveal both difficult financial straits and a fierce pride in contributing as much as possible.[361]

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[360] Peck, 54-62, 110-111. For more on the manual training movement, see Robert H. Abzug, *Passionate Liberator: Theodore Dwight Weld and the Dilemma of Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), Milton C. Sernett, *Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), James H. Fairchild, *Oberlin: The Colony and the College, 1833-1883* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1984) and James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

[361] Fairfax to Hayden, 4 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38440, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Elsie Mae and Doris Robinson to Fairfax, Spring 1962, ibid.; Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 17.

Organizers asked the families of all placement students to contribute to their children's support to the best of their financial capabilities, but did not predicate acceptance into the program on ability to pay. Families of the Berea students, however, were particularly notable for their insistence on bearing partial financial responsibility. Elnora Hayes wrote Fairfax in March 1962 that her father's hospitalization had precipitated her lapse in payment, but requested that "if you will arrange payment for me and bill me I will try to catch up in the near future on an installment plan." Martha Smith, whose son Ralph graduated from the Foundation School in 1962, echoed the same sentiment in a letter written five days later. Enclosing the $100 she and her husband had saved for Ralph's tuition, she commented that, "I do not know just how much more we can pay but please understand that we will do what we can any way or other even if we have to pay you during the summer." It was Nellie Robinson, Doris and Elsie Mae's mother, however, who best articulated the struggle and pride of the Prince Edward black community when she wrote that:

> If we can't send anything before you pay their bill we'll send something to you and you can put it in your treasure [sic]. It may not be much on account of the weather and sickness of my mother and father but we'll send what we can. I'm sorry we don't have anything now and please don't think we are trying to get out of giving anything.[362]

The Berea experience exerted a powerful influence on some of the students. Elnora Hayes wrote Jean Fairfax that the Kentucky school transformed her sister Frances, raving that "she is really a changed person and personality thanks to you." Ralph Smith summed up his interracial athletic experiences with the reflection that, "I didn't win

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[362] Elnora Hayes to Fairfax, 14 March 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38440, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Martha Smith to Fairfax, 19 March 1962, ibid; Nellie Robinson to Fairfax, 16 March 1962, ibid.

anything, but I gained confidence in myself in being with the other race." Going on to enroll at the historically black St. Paul's College, Smith spent thirty-six years with the Social Security Administration, and committed himself to social justice, serving as Vice President of the Prince William County NAACP and chairman of his church's Social Action committee. When contacted in 2003 by members of the AFSC Prince Edward County Working Party, he credited AFSC and Berea College with providing him the grounding necessary for success in life, ascribing his accomplishments to their dual influence. As students like Smith returned home eager to tell others about their experiences with this unusual community, other Prince Edward young people enrolled at Berea, extending the impact of the placement project. Even after the advent of consolidated rural schools and blacktop roads precipitated the abolition of the Foundation School in 1967, Prince Edwarders continued to use the college as an avenue for attaining a quality education at an affordable cost.[363]

By summer 1962, the AFSC budget for Prince Edward County neared exhaustion. In retrospect, Oliver Hill's seemingly gloom-and-doom warning that the legal case might drag on until September 1961 appeared almost laughable in the face of the fourth year of closed schools. Through the arduous efforts of NAACP lawyers, the *Griffin* case continued to wend its torturous way toward the Supreme Court, but the situation in the county remained unchanged. Financial constraints necessitated a new policy for the third year of the placement project: requiring sponsoring committees to raise their own budgets

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[363] Ralph Smith, Response to Questionnaire, 10 June 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38440, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "AFSC Prince Edward County Student Placement Project," Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 17.

without supplementary assistance from the AFSC national or regional offices. The new requirement did end placement in several financially struggling communities, but the combination of a smaller number of children requesting placement and the addition of a new sponsoring committee kept the program functional.[364]

Organizers required all third year applicants to agree to accept placement in a different community and to promise to remain for the entire school year. Primarily program veterans recommended for continued placement by their 1961-62 sponsoring committees, the participants readily agreed to the new conditions. A few newcomers, including Rev. Griffin's eldest son, Leslie, Jr. (Skippy), also joined the ranks for the final year of the program. Even a figure as familiar with the consequences of missed school as Rev. Griffin nonetheless worried about entrusting his son to the care of others, concerned that Skippy's host mother would not be firm enough with him and allow his passion for football to erode his attention to his coursework.[365]

At the beginning of the school year, Prince Edward students returned to Springfield, Dayton, Baltimore, Iowa City, Media, and Berea: the exception to the financial independence policy. Despite the Foundation School's expense and lack of a formal sponsoring committee, staff members believed that the placement exerted a positive impact upon the black community as a whole, and chose, in hopes that "the relationship to Berea College will continue long after school open," to subsidize the four returning students. Organizers relocated the Kalamazoo, Yellow Springs, and

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[364] Fairfax to Community Relations Division Executive Committee, 16 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38535, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[365] Fairfax, Memo to Students, Parents, Community Sponsoring Committees, 10 August 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 28223, ibid; Fairfax to Jean Mason, 19 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, ibid.

Moorestown students, along with four who spent 1961-62 in Springfield, to Boston, where the new Greater Boston Committee for the Placement of Prince Edward County Children waited to welcome them. The Greater Boston project encompassed placements in Newton, Cambridge, Medford, and New Bedford. Each of the four school districts waived tuition, a local physician volunteered his services, and two dress shops gave the three Medford girls new dresses for Christmas. The owner of school supplies shop in Medford, a World War II European refugee, supplied all the students with school supplies free of charge. Participants became active in local religious communities; five involved themselves in African American congregations and two joined interracial Christian groups. Henry Cabarrus and Skippy Griffin's athletic prowess won them considerable admiration, and while all of the students received social invitations from their new classmates, the two athletes became two of the most popular boys in school.[366]

AFSC staff members applauded when Ruth Alice Lee, one of the New Bedford girls, formed close friendships with many of her Portuguese schoolmates, immersing herself in a culture foreign to her experience in Virginia. Forty years later, she remained in close contact with five of the girls who constituted her "crowd" in New Bedford. Barbara Botts, who struggled with feelings of loneliness and a sense of being a burden throughout her first two years in the program, found herself unexpectedly comfortable in Newton. In her Moorestown placement she lived with a black family, but constituted the only African American in her class at school, an uncomfortable experience for a young girl raised in the segregated South. Even her exposure to the local African American

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[366] Fairfax to Community Relations Division Executive Committee, 16 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38535, ibid; Robert A. McLean, "Displaced Students from Virginia: 7 Negro Teenagers Attempt to Retrieve Schooling Here," *Boston Sunday Globe*, 9 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, ibid.

community, however, failed to assuage her feelings of not alienation. "I never really felt that I belonged with the group in Moorestown," she reflected later. "Most of the people there had lived there all their lives and I felt that I was intruding." In Newton, Barbara's white hosts resided in a more diverse neighborhood. Her class of twenty-eight included six other black students, and her decreased self-consciousness enabled her to more easily forge lasting friendships. Her host family's warmth and welcoming nature set the tone for her experience. As she told R.C. Smith in 1963, "Mr. H. has three daughters. From the time I came there, though, he talked about his four girls. It helped me not to feel like an outsider. I went to football games and took part in social activities just like anyone else."[367]

Committed to looking beyond the surface, Boston committee members wrote the students' parents to ask their perceptions of the children's adjustment. All responded that their child seemed reasonably happy, although one or two indicated sensing some loneliness in between the lines. Minutes from the December committee meeting demonstrated concerted reaction on the committee's part: "In cases where we suspect [loneliness], members of the committee are undertaking certain friendly steps that they hope will help."[368]

The Committee's chair, Ruth Batson, the force behind METCO, a suburbs/city partnership that provided an opportunity for Boston's urban black children to enroll in

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[367] Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 27; "AFSC Prince Edward County Student Placement Project," Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 256.

[368] Boston Committee for Placement of Prince Edward County Children, "Report of Evaluation Sub-Committee," 6 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

suburban schools, provided a link between the Prince Edward relief program and the city's own school desegregation struggle. A dynamic advocate for educational equity who continued as a key leader in the NAACP's campaign against de facto segregation in the Boston schools throughout her involvement with the committee, Batson provided the students a living example of a civil rights crusader.[369] As Fairfax noted years later:

> One of the project's objectives was to expose our youth to organizations that were promoting racial justice and to blacks who were leaders in them. Through our local sponsoring committees...the Prince Edward students met strong, socially conscious black men and women who were leaders in efforts to combat discrimination and segregation in their communities.[370]

While Boston students observed Batson, Springfield teenagers rubbed elbows with Chester Gibbs, who spearheaded local campaigns for fair housing and equal employment and consistently spoke out for racial justice from his platform as a member of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. Others found themselves literally living in close proximity to community leaders and civil rights activists. Bessie Reed boarded with the Evans family, headed by an Alabama sharecropper's son who despite sporadic access to inferior schooling, earned his high school diploma at age twenty-two and served with the Tuskegee Airmen. After earning a masters degree, Robert Evans accepted a position with the Holyoke Public Schools, becoming the

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[369] For more on Batson and METCO, see Joanne Theoharis, "They Told Us Our Kids Were Stupid: Ruth Batson and the Educational Movement in Boston," in *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 43-94; Ruth Batson, *The Black Educational Movement in Boston: A Sequence of Historical Events and a Chronology* (Boston: Northeastern University School of Education, 2001) and Ruth M. Batson and Robert C. Hayden, *A History of METCO: A Suburban Education for Boston's Urban Students* (Boston: Select Publications, 1987).

[370] Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 18, 29.

community's first African American teacher and a civic leader of wide repute. Hampton Scott (Media) and Carlton Terry (New Bedford) resided with officers in the local NAACP chapter, and one of the Boston area students lived in an African American home headed by a female social worker and law student, the kind of successful professional role model generally lacking in Prince Edward County.[371]

That said, the "strong, socially conscious" role models organizers sought to provide the children were not exclusively African American. The important roles played by two Japanese-American internment camp survivors and a member of an Austrian Resistance family has already been noted. Moses Scott gained firsthand experience with a kind of racial prejudice falling outside the lines of black and white when Victor Penzer, an Auschwitz survivor, and his wife opened their Newton home to him, moving out of their bedroom into the basement in order to give him the best room in the house. The summer before his relocation to Newton, Moses Scott participated in an AFSC-sponsored East-West Travel Seminar focused on promoting peace and international brotherhood. He and twenty other high school students from across the nation traveled across the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, meeting local people and learning to look beyond labels of "Communist" and "Bolshevik." While in Poland, the group visited Auschwitz, an experience that no doubt influenced his relationship with his new host father. Throughout the year, a man Hitler deemed unworthy of life on the basis of "race" and a boy whom Prince Edward County's white segregationists deemed unworthy of an

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[371] Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 29; Morisey, "Summary Report on Prince Edward County Project," 26 September 1960, p. 15, 1960 Box, Folder 38132, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Host Family Information Forms, 1962-63, 1962 Box, Folder 38441, ibid; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 249.

education and a future on the same basis forged a lifelong connection. Now a successful retiree with children of his own, Moses Scott remains in contact with the Penzer family.[372]

Ultimate Impact: Why Does Placement Matter?

The exposure to adults committed to fighting racial injustice exerted a profound impact upon the students. When the Student Christian Federation of New England came to Prince Edward County in the summer of 1962 to run an educational project, its only participant from a southern institution was Phyllistine Ward, a Bennett College student placed by the AFSC in Yellow Springs her senior year of high school. Oscar and William Reid (Dayton) and Kitty Johnson (Kalamazoo) also joined the project as volunteer instructional aides. Classroom teacher Richard Zorn described Oscar Reid as "conscientious and sincerely interested in helping the children," going on to note that, "I was very pleased to see that the education he is receiving outside of Prince Edward County is being reflected in his deeds here."[373]

County authorities took a more dim view of the contributions of out-of-town students returning for the summer, arguing that the moderate rise in Prince Edward's juvenile petty crime rate between 1959 and 1963 derived from "bad habits learned outside the county." Citing a supposed rush of black-perpetrated burglaries in early June

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[372] Moses Scott, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[373] Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 30; Richard Zorn to Fairfax, 15 August 1962, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

1961 and 1962, Judge William Hay, Sr., of the Juvenile and County Courts insisted that "some of them have been cases of students who have been away to large Northern schools. When they find out it doesn't work here, we don't have any more trouble for awhile." While no records indicate that any AFSC students ran into any trouble with the law prior to the civil rights demonstrations of 1963, it is interesting to speculate that the very qualities of greater assertiveness and willingness to challenge white supremacy so valued by AFSC staff members may have appeared sinister and dangerous to those charged with maintaining public order.[374]

When the placement project group returned en masse to the county in June 1961, Helen Baker noted the girls' boredom with the "nothingness" of life in Prince Edward and the boys' depression over the lack of occupational opportunity. Robert Green corroborated this impression, noting that the majority of the six AFSC students he interviewed in the summer of 1963 desired to leave the county and attend school or pursue work in locales offering greater opportunity:

> They noted, even more acutely, its [the county's] limitations, its lack of socio-economic opportunities, and wished to leave a quickly as possible after completing high school. Some considered themselves to have become sophisticated beyond whatever advantages the county might have to offer, and felt life in the county to be uninteresting and lacking in challenge. One can "only stand still" here, as one subject expressed it.

Nonetheless, one of the students interviewed by Green did express a desire to return to Prince Edward as a trained social worker. Committed to racial uplift and the

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[374] Henry McLaughlin, "Juvenile Mischief Has Risen Slightly in Prince Edward," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 September 1962.

improvement of conditions in the county, she commented that "I might not live to see this come about, but my grandchildren will. And somebody has to be willing to start.[375]

Despite this strong desire to depart after high school graduation, the majority of the placement students maintained a commitment in the present to challenging the white oligarchy. After a debriefing meeting in early summer 1961, Helen Baker commented on the teenagers' increased willingness to confront the structures of inequality:

> They are a self-assured lot. They expressed themselves freely and best of all they have some very positive ideas about some things that ought to be going on here. Last night at the discussion period, they were handling ideas about what they could do to help get the schools open by September. Their suggestions ranged all the way from picketing (they didn't mention what they would picket) to going to the Board of Supervisors. One thing is certain, they have come back to Farmville with some new visions of what can be.

When street demonstrations came to Farmville two summers later, three of the four youth leaders possessed strong ties to the AFSC: Skippy Griffin and Carlton Terry through the placement program and Ernestine Land through the high school leadership seminar series. Significant numbers of AFSC students joined the protests, many calling or writing ahead while still in their northern communities to secure information about the developing plans and parental permission to participate. Their exposure to the world outside Prince Edward County and the courage and self-possession cultivated in leaving their homes and families to start over in strange communities boosted their determination to act and lessened their fear of local white leaders.[376]

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[375] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 20 June 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Green et al, p. 201.

[376] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 20 June 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Near the end of his two year placement in Springfield, James Elvin Edwards told a news reporter that his sojourn in Massachusetts had profoundly altered his attitudes toward race relations in the South. "Before I came North, I never worried much about integration and things like that," he commented. "In fact, I didn't think I could ever enjoy going to school with white kids." Admitting that two years ago he would have written off a demonstration outside the Prince Edward County Courthouse as silly, he went on to unequivocally announce his staunch support for the various civil rights campaigns burgeoning across the nation.[377]

Other children underwent similar transformations in outlook and ambition. In June 1961, Helen Baker described an uplifting encounter with returning placement student Joseph Wiley, observing that, "He changed the whole day for me, maybe the whole summer." The changes in his demeanor and attitude both stunned and thrilled her. "In all my life, I had never seem such a metamorphosis," she continued. "Did we say that we wanted these children to acquire new sights and aspirations? This was it." A young woman who previously expressed frustration at not living up to her host mother's expectations thrilled staff members with her positive assessment of the larger value of her placement experience:

> I have learned more in the past two years than I have in all my schooling. The one thing which I enjoyed most was being able to be an individual. By being able to be an individual I mean being able to think for myself and being able to express my own opinion as long as I didn't infringe upon the rights of other students. I

[377] "School Days Ending Here for 6 Virginia Pupils: Integrated Experience Brings Changed Outlook," *Springfield Union News,* 21 June 1963, clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

> enjoyed being able to weight [sic] things out, discuss, form my opinion on major world issues..."[378]

Yellow Springs veteran David Patterson wrote in 2003 that placement exposed him to experiences unknown in Prince Edward County. "I owe a lot to the people in Yellow Springs," he reflected. "These experiences were very helpful in my growing up days and have made me become a better person." In the heady days following his 1962 graduation from Berea College Foundation School, Ralph Smith exuberantly informed Jean Fairfax that placement dramatically changed his life:

> If it were not for the younger children being out of school, this closing would be the best thing to happen to us. It gave us a chance to see what the world is really like. For example, who would have thought Moses [Scott] would ever go to Russia or I would dance with a girl of the opposite race? Thanks for everything![379]

The long-term effects of the program, however, impacted others besides the participating students. Many sponsoring committee members found themselves profoundly stretched by their contact with the children and their interaction with AFSC representatives, who continuously challenged them to pursue opportunities for expanded interracial and intercultural interaction. Their enhanced sensitivity brought many face to face, for the first time, with their own racial stereotypes and the patterns of segregation in their own communities. As one committee stalwart admitted, despite the fact that all the

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[378] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 20 June 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Kathryn Patterson, Response to Questionnaire, 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38529, ibid.

[379] David Patterson, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Ralph Smith, Response to Questionnaire, 10 June 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38440, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

committee members also sat on the local human relations committee, prior to the placement program they had very little actual contact with their black neighbors.[380]

In the wake of the students' departure, some host parents and committee members continued to press forward on the issues brought home to them during their involvement with the AFSC project. Henry Weissman, the white Springfield attorney who hosted Raymond Wiley and Rudolph Stokes, developed a deeply-rooted passion for eradicating segregated education through his observation of his host sons' academic handicaps. In the year after their departure, he appeared before the Springfield School Committee with recommendations to correct racial imbalance in the city schools and actively opposed the candidacy of two individuals he considered supportive of de facto segregation.[381]

When the placement program passed from the stage with the advent of the Prince Edward Free Schools in the fall of 1963, it left a long shadow. Eighteen students potentially otherwise forever barred from an education held high school diplomas. Forty-nine others remained on track to graduate from the Free Schools or the reopened public schools around the time they would have without the closings. In significant contrast to their peers who remained in the county, the vast majority of program veterans eventually earned their high school diplomas and a high number continued on to college and graduate work. With expanded fields of vision, heightened aspirations and new

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[380] Jean Fairfax, "American Friends Service Committee Prince Edward County, VA Program: Student Placement Project, 1960-1963," p. 18.

[381] Juanita Griffin, "Negro Boys from Virginia Left Fond Memories Here," *Springfield Republican*, n.d., clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; "Segregation Victims Describe Feelings In Coming North to Continue School," *Springfield Union News*, December 1961, clipping, Springfield/Holyoke Sponsoring Committee File, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

confidence in themselves, many pursued professional and personal paths generally considered out of the reach of rural southern black children. A significant number chose public service careers, devoting their lives to helping others as they themselves had once been helped. Their exposure to strong, socially conscious role models and increased capacity to handle new, intimidating situations increased their propensity to advocate for change as social and political activists, NAACP officials, lawyers, foreign affairs specialists, social workers, educators, and youth services professionals.

At the end of time with the placement program, James Ghee remained in his host city. Deeply invested in his welfare, the Iowa City Sponsoring Committee maintained him until his high school graduation in 1965 in order to allow him to meet the residency requirements to apply for in-state tuition at the University of Iowa. Upon his admission, the Committee eased the transition to college by paying his freshman year tuition. Ghee spent his junior year at the American University of Beirut and ultimately returned to his home state to pursue a law degree at the University of Virginia. After graduation, he worked two years in Richmond as an NAACP-sponsored Earl Warren Legal Fellow at the firm of Hill, Tucker, and Marsh, litigators of the original Prince Edward case. In 1975, he returned to Prince Edward County to become Farmville's first black lawyer. "I saw the need for a black attorney in Farmville," he told a reporter in 1979, "and because someone had helped me while I was here, and I thought I could be of help to others." During his twenty year practice in the county, he won election to the Board of Supervisors (the first African American elected from the majority-white Farmville District), and appointment to the Longwood College Board of Visitors. Ghee served as a delegate to three Democratic National Conventions (1980, 1984, and 1988), held the

presidency of the Virginia State Conference NAACP from 1982 to 1986, and ultimately won election to the NAACP's National Board of Directors in 1991.[382]

Carlton Terry received a Masters of Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University in 1974 and went on to pursue a twenty year career as a project manager for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Throughout his time with the Foreign Service, he assisted refugees fleeing war-torn Burundi, chaired the Western Kenya Disaster Relief Unit Committee, assisted with private sector development in Egypt, and managed the North Africa Regional Office for Non-Government Organizations. In 2001, he won appointment as Special Assistant for Protocol and International Affairs in the office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia. Personal experience with racial injustice underlay Terry's lifelong immersion in the realities of African and African American life in a racially divided world. Eva Johnson, one of the girls Fairfax pursued for a Springfield placement, found a mentor in a Springfield social worker who encouraged her to go into the field. After graduating from Moton High School in 1967, Johnson enrolled at Virginia State to pursue a B.A. in Sociology. After graduation, she served as a social worker in three Virginia counties, including a term of employment with Prince Edward County Social Services.[383]

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[382] James Ghee, Interview by Jean Fairfax, 26 September 1989, transcript, 1962 Box, Folder 38591, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Tyler Whitley, "Black Writing New Page in Prince Edward 'Racist' History," *Richmond News Leader*, 23 November 1979; James Ghee, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder. Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[383] Carlton Terry, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; "AFSC Prince Edward County Student Placement Project," ibid.

After graduating from Howard University in 1967 with a dual major in mathematics and physics, Moses Scott fulfilled a dream born in his days in the placement program. Enrolling at Harvard Business School, he received his Masters of Business Administration in 1974 and pursued a twenty-four year career with AT&T and IBM. Leslie Francis Griffin, Jr. graduated from Harvard College in 1970 with a solid reputation as a campus activist. One of the leaders of the student protest demanding a black studies program, Griffin left a permanent legacy on campus in the form of the W.E.B. DuBois Institute for African and African American Research, now one of the nation's leading centers for the study of black culture. Settling in the Boston area, he threw himself into the city's school desegregation struggle, serving on the receivership team at South Boston High School from 1976-79, during the height of the Boston busing crisis.[384] After several years in student affairs at Northeastern University, he took his passion for corporate social responsibility to the *Boston Globe*.[385]

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[384] The Boston busing crisis centered around the problem of achieving racial balance in the face of extensive residential segregation. When Judge W. Arthur Garrity ruled in April 1974 that the Boston School Committee had covertly engaged in deliberate attempts to encourage and maintain segregation in city schools and was thus subject to a court-ordered desegregation plan that incorporated large amounts of busing, ethnic whites revolted and the city exploded. The rioting and racial ugliness that accompanied the busing of schoolchildren permanently scarred some neighborhoods and demonstrated to the world that segregation, class prejudice, and racism were not regional problems, but rather ones that indicted the entire nation. See Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), Alan Lupo, *Liberty's Chosen Home: The Politics of Violence in Boston*, Second Edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988) and J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

[385] Moses Scott, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Paul Nussbaum and Annette John-Hall, "Fight for School Equality Still Leaves Scars for Many," *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* 12 May 2004; Jean Fairfax to

A significant number of AFSC students chose careers in public education, defining their vocation as strengthening and protecting the system they and their families fought so hard to protect. Barbara Botts now serves as principal of a Richmond middle school and recently earned her Ed.D. in Educational Administration. Kitty Johnson, the young woman who volunteered her services to the Student Christian Movement summer education project, earned a B.A. in Early Childhood Education and taught elementary school for ten years. Yellow Springs' David Patterson served the Richmond Public Schools for twenty-eight years as an Industrial Arts/Technology Education teacher and Title I math specialist.[386]

Moorestown Friends' first black graduate, Samuel Cobbs spent two years in the National Teacher Corps while earning his M.Ed. at Indiana State, then joined the faculty at Hampton Institute, serving for four years as a demonstration teacher in an early educational pilot program entitled Follow Through. After leaving Follow Through, Cobbs accepted a classroom teacher position with Hampton Public Schools, retiring in 2001 after thirty-five years working with children. Iowa City's James Lee trained to teach Head Start and Operation Catch-Up and spent many years as a substitute teacher and instructional aide in the Prince Edward school system. Phyllistine Ward Mosley pursued a career with USDA County Extension Services as a 4-H Agent and Home

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"Our Gang," 29 June 2002, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

[386] Brinson: 21-25; LaNae Johnson, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; David Patterson, ibid.

Economist and Alfreda Hicks Smith served a long term as a secretary/bookkeeper at Prince Edward County High School.[387]

Despite the difficulties, challenges, and costs of operating the placement program, AFSC staff members never lost faith that placement not only powerfully impacted the lives of the participating children, but reached past the students themselves to leave indelible marks on both sponsoring communities and other Prince Edward residents. While acknowledging the high costs of the program and the relatively small numbers of children served, they insisted that:

> The horizons of families and of younger brothers and sisters have been broadened... Deep relationships have been established across lines of economic and social class. Professional persons, especially child welfare workers, have become involved in a placement effort which has had somewhat different criteria from their own and has caused some of them to look more favorably on the idea of interracial placement of children. As national office staff has emphasized the broad interracial and intercultural goals of the project, members of our sponsoring committees have been led to new insights about the segregated nature of most relationships in their communities.[388]

Forty-five years later, the assessment remains fair. Without legitimizing the actions of Prince Edward's white segregationists or diluting the primary goal of forcing the reopening of the public schools, the placement program successfully turned the tragedy of the closings in a new world of opportunity for a small group of children. A half a century later, their children and grandchildren continue to reap the benefits of the investment made in a group of teenagers determined not to allow white obstructionists to

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[387] Samuel Cobbs, Response to AFSC Prince Edward County Emergency Student Placement Project Questionnaire, 2003, Placement Project Questionnaires Folder, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; James E. Lee, Jr., ibid; Phyllistine Ward Mosley, ibid; Alfreda Hicks Smith, ibid.

[388] Fairfax to Community Relations Division Executive Committee, 16 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38436, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

set the boundaries for their lives. From the beginning, however, organizers stressed the program's temporary, stop-gap nature, insisting that it be viewed as a component part of a larger program aimed at securing structural change.

Despite their excitement over placement's potential to fulfill the goal underlying all AFSC programming – investing in participants and building their capacity as leaders and engaged citizens – they argued against any attempts to suggest that privately funded educational programs could adequately serve the Prince Edward black population. Only an acceptance on part of county authorities of their constitutional and moral obligation to provide free quality public education for all residents regardless of race, they maintained, would bring true educational and social equity to the county. The small scale of the program also clearly demonstrates the inherent limitations of "educational rescue" programs. Despite a cash outlay that nearly drained the budget for the entire Prince Edward County Community Relations Project and the energetic commitment of hundreds of volunteers and regional office staff members, the placement program served only sixty-seven students.

Though staff members prided themselves on serving any financially needy students and parents who sought assistance, the program lacked the infrastructure and secure funding necessary to serve the entire out-of-school community. In all likelihood, it could not have accommodated a significantly higher enrollment, at least not for an indefinite period of time. The volunteers and donors upon whom the success of the venture depended made profound sacrifices that would not have proven indeterminately sustainable. Furthermore, the very nature of the program barred the participation of those incapable of leaving the county for physical, emotional, or familial reasons.

Recognition of these factors of limitation does not constitute a criticism of the placement program. Designed as an emergency, temporary response to a desperate situation, it never purported to be a perfect solution, merely to be one avenue for saving a fairly self-selected group of children from educational disaster. AFSC staff and volunteers' ability to turn placement into a world of opportunity for participants bears powerful testimony to the depth of their commitment to the larger organizational goals of the Prince Edward County Community Relations Project: transforming the power relations governing the county, nurturing a locally-led movement for educational, social, and political equity, building individuals' capacity to act as agents of change in their own lives, and creating a meaningfully-integrated quality public school system to serve every child in the county. As they insisted all along, the Emergency Placement Project could not stand alone as a feasible solution to the crisis. But as a component part of a larger strategy, it more than exceeded its goal of drawing hope out of tragedy.

CHAPTER 5

"DIGGING UP SOME LIBERALS:" AFSC STAFF MEMBERS AND THE WHITE COMMUNITY, 1960-64

As darkness fell on June 3, 1960, a group of white individuals interested in developing a strategy for the eventual reopening of the public schools emerged from a semi-secret meeting at former School Board Chairman Maurice Large's Cumberland County cabin. They found a "patrol force" of Foundation board members waiting outside to identify them. According to Calvin Bass, a car parked on a nearby public road trained its headlights upon all the cars exiting from Large's driveway. Lester Andrews spotted one of his Foundation friends sitting in another car writing down names. Other Foundation leaders cruised up and down the road. A story circulated that C.W. "Rat" Glenn, one of the most powerful and feared men in the county, forced several drivers off the road in an effort to ascertain the drivers and get their license plate numbers. Other attendees later claimed that Foundation officials stopped and questioned them as they drove up to their homes.[389]

The "Bush Leaguers," as the Foundation faithful derisively labeled them, woke up the following day to find a mimeographed set of the meeting minutes circulating Farmville. Conversation on the streets centered around the meeting. Though largely accurate in detail, the mimeographed minutes listed attendees by name and portrayed their actions in the worst possible light. In a lengthy passage of poorly written purple prose, the distributor branded all those connected with the Bush League as traitors.

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[389] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 180; William Bagwell, Memo to Jean Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Pointing to the high percentage of businessmen in attendance, he/she considered them "willing to sell their honor and the moral upbringing of our white children for a few dollars which they alledgedly [sic] lost by a business slump blamed by them on our school situation." He/she charged attendees with allying with "these socialist, intergrationalists [sic], do gooders' and educationalists who would sacrifice your children." Even those who did not see the document heard the stories, which grew in magnitude as they circulated. One attendee later noted that "the rumors about that meeting on the lake are something fierce. Now they have it that Oliver Hill was there and that we all were going to integrate the schools right then."[390]

The hostility toward the Leaguers was ferocious. Two attendees found their jobs threatened; one quit when his supervisor told him that no man could work for him and participate in such activities. R.C. Smith observed friends passing each other on the street without speaking and irate whites refusing to patronize stores where they had shopped all their lives. One attendee, upon hearing reports that a lifelong friend had called him an integrationist, the ultimate insult among southern whites in the 1950's, went to the man's store, and instigated what he later remembered as a terrible, hurtful public confrontation. Another suffered so much over the allegations made against him that he visited a lawyer in Richmond to discuss the possibility of a slander suit.[391]

Many of the Bush Leaguers were Prince Edward natives, business people with deep roots in the county. Unlike James Bash and James Kennedy, their careers did not offer them opportunities elsewhere when Prince Edward became too hot a climate. As

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[390] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 180-182.

[391] Ibid.

one man noted, "I have not lived in this town all my life to be an outcast at this late date." Most retreated underground with their opinions and the League folded, never to meet again. Nevertheless, the movement of comparative dissent culminating in the exposure of the Bush League had roots in earlier developments. All in all, the winter and spring of 1960 offered glimpses of a potentially moderate spirit at work in the county, a spirit stamped into submission by June, but retaining the potential to break out again. For the first time, AFSC staff members saw evidence that the Prince Edward white community did include the sort of individuals who, with support and encouragement, might stand against the county's course of action. They glimpsed potential leaders in whom to invest and followers who promised to constitute the core of a pro-public schools coalition. Consequently, they reoriented the Community Relations Program to place the assembling of an interracial moderates' coalition on an equal plane with strengthening PECCA and providing much-needed services to the black community.[392]

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The spirit that animated the Bush League first flickered in January, amid Foundation efforts to buy the Farmville High School building. Virginia state law required referenda upon the sale of public school buildings, but allowed school boards the authority to declare buildings surplus and dispose of them upon their own terms. Attempting to make use of this loophole, PESF administrators, looking to their own future and seeing the need for a permanent building, approached the Prince Edward County School Board with the request that it surplus Farmville High. The indefatigable C.G. Gordon Moss, Academic Dean and Professor of History at Longwood College, the

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[392] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 184.

county's most outspoken white dissident, later charged that the intersection of the attempt to buy the school buildings with the Southside Schools offer (December 1959) was hardly coincidental.[393]

In Moss's opinion, the lack of adequate buildings seriously handicapped the private school effort throughout the winter of 1960. He told a Michigan State interviewing team that, "The segregationists realized their desperate need for the public white schools and saw that if they could get the Negroes to accept the token of a private school system and the use of the Negro public schools, then they would have no difficulty whatsoever in obtaining the use of the white schools." The board refused the Foundation request, declaring that any further disposal of public school property would require a referendum. As pressure to accept the offer continued to build, board members, particularly Chairman Lester Andrews, found themselves the objects of much scrutiny and some overt coercion. While some friends questioned their commitment to segregation and the education of the county's white students, others avoided them. Manipulation and avoidance even trickled down to the teenage population; in the mist of the stand-off, one of Andrews' children came to him with the comment, "Daddy, if you'll sell the schools I can go to a party..."[394]

When the Foundation made a second request to purchase the school buildings, fearful that other board members might change their positions on the issue, thus allowing a pro-Foundation member to issue a tie-breaking vote, Andrews staged a tactical walkout

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[393] "Prince Edward Group Will Build Own School," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 20 January 1960, School Closings Clipping File, LU Archives.

[394] Edgar A. Schuler and Robert L. Green, "A Southern Educator and School Integration: An Interview," *Phylon*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1967): 28-40; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 176-178.

to throw a wrench in the gears. Perhaps somewhat to his own surprise, four of the five other members – George Shorter, Charles Baird, Calvin Bass, and T. Cooke Hix – followed him. Segregationist leaders previously acknowledged Andrews' and Baird's commitment to "riding this thing out" and eventually resuming operation of the public schools, but the mass resignation of 5/6th of the Board threatened, for the first time, to substantially crack the façade of complete white unity. None of the resigning members supported the *Brown* decision. All considered themselves segregationists. Their school-age children attended Prince Edward Academy. Businessmen and professionals, the community held them in high regard, yet here they were, leaving civic service rather than accede to the demands of the Foundation majority.[395]

When the *Farmville Herald* covered the resignations, it portrayed the board members as diligent men who served faithfully, but broke under overwhelming pressure from the rapacious federal courts. In the interest of preserving the image of white solidarity, it failed to mention the conflict with the Foundation, the pressure emanating from the white community, or the fact that those who left their posts condemned the Board of Supervisors' refusal to anticipate the reopening of the public schools. Nonetheless, it did print the full text of the resigning members' statement, which predicted untold disaster at the end of the county's chosen road. "In its decision," they wrote, "the school board has been guided by the fundamental belief that education must be provided for all the school-age children of the entire county." Prophetically, they warned, "If a community leaves uneducated any large portion of its citizens, because they

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[395] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 175-177; Wil Hartzler to Fairfax, 21 June 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Allan Jones, "Group Cites Need for a Referendum," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 April 1960, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

cannot afford its cost, or for any other reason, it inevitably creates for itself enormous problems in welfare, delinquency, crime, and unemployment."[396]

The school board and the Board of Supervisors held co-defendant status in the NAACP suit – both rigidly opposed desegregation of the county schools - but parted company in their vision for the future. The resigning board members considered the schools closed only temporarily, until saner minds could chart another course of action. But the Supervisors and the PESF held that only a reversal of *Brown*, which they considered unlikely, would return the county to the business of public education. The mass resignation, however, effectively ended the parting of the ways by providing PESF supporters an opportunity to appoint a pro-Foundation Board. In 1950's Virginia, school board candidates did not run for election. County Circuit Court Judge-appointed school trustee electoral boards in each county appointed leading citizens to fill vacant seats. As a member of the electoral board, J. Barrye Wall, Jr., and other PESF supporters quickly appointed five Foundation stalwarts to join holdout George Palmer in a new Foundation-friendly board. W. Edward Smith, W.L. Dickenson, Dr. Ray Moore, C.L. Jones, and Joseph Glenn took office in August 1960. The reconstituted school board never again crossed the Board of Supervisors or the PESF. Independent action ceased with the walkout.[397]

New chairman W. Edward Smith, a physician, made a deliberate point of avoiding AFSC Community Relations Program Director Harry Boyte's attempts to speak

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[396] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 174-176.

[397] Ibid, p. 176; "New And Old Business Greets Reorganized School Board," *Farmville Herald*, 12 August 1960, School Closings Clipping File, LU Archives; Harry Boyte to Fairfax, 9 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38430, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

with him in the wake of Judge Oren Lewis's July 1962 ruling. The decision stated clearly that "the public schools of Prince Edward County may not be closed to avoid the effect of the law of the land as interpreted by the Supreme Court, while the Commonwealth of Virginia permits other public schools to remain open at the expense of the taxpayers." Lewis's ruling buoyed hopes that the schools would reopen in the fall, and Boyte subsequently contacted Smith to ask whether the school board would request the State Board of Education's assistance in recruiting teachers. The chairman responded with hostility, noting that he did not trust "those people in Richmond" to seek the right kind of teacher for the Prince Edward schools. He further accused Boyte, who had nothing to do with teacher recruitment, of plotting to bring in individuals who would inculcate the children with "ideas foreign to our American way."[398]

Turning back to the issue that prompted the walkout, the public school buildings never came under Academy ownership. They remained empty, padlocked, and waiting. During the interim between the boards, the Foundation dropped its interest in the buildings, deciding instead to build its own Upper School, a permanent structure symbolic of the permanency of the private school effort. Completed in the fall of 1961, the new building allowed Foundation officials to brag that "beginning from scratch, your Foundation has operated three years with all of its expenses paid, and erected a building valued at $400,000." Suspect origin tagged some of the equipment in the new school. Dean Moss charged that Foundation officials paid a group of teenage boys, including his own son, to transfer mechanical equipment from the locked Worsham High School to the

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[398] Morland, "The Tragedy of Public Schools," p. 1313-14, Separate But Not Equal Online Exhibit, VCU; Boyte to Fairfax, 31 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

new Academy building. Upon looking into the matter, he found no indication in the public record that a sale of these materials had been proposed and/or approved.[399]

Despite the strength of community support for the Foundation, Lester Andrews walked out of the school board meeting with full awareness that at least a few other county residents preferred public schools to the leadership's narrative of constitutionalism, patriotism, and federalism. Some of these individuals worked in local business or industry. Others, such as Moss, fellow Longwood history professor Marvin Schlegel, and Hampden-Sydney professor of religion Charles McRae, held affiliation with the colleges. At least one member of the group held a high position with the Foundation. Small groups of this silent minority had already begun to meet in private homes across the county. The attempt to buy Farmville High and the subsequent school board resignation emboldened these disparate supporters of the public schools, and the meetings grew larger. When Andrews' business partner at Farmville Manufacturing Company, Maurice Large, joined him in his efforts on behalf of the public schools, the Bush League gained another meeting place and another leader of significant stature within the community.[400]

In the late spring, at the urging of Dr. Moss, the group held an interracial meeting at which white members presented a proposal calling upon blacks to agree to a three year moratorium on desegregation in exchange for white acceptance of the principle underlying *Brown*. Though very few, if any, of the estimated 350-500 whites who hoped

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[399] B. Blanton Hanbury, President, PESF, "A Report to You," n.d., School Closings Clippings File. LU Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 30 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[400] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 175-184; Boyte to Fairfax, 29 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38458, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

to see the schools reopened evidenced any interest in integration, the interracial meeting fueled community characterization of the group as "integrationist" in its aims. The June 3 meeting at Large's cabin had a fairly conservative agenda: welcome new attendees (the group employed a "bring a friend" approach toward boosting its membership) and discuss a plan to encourage those present to approach their district Supervisor with a request to open the schools. When word of the plans leaked out two days before the gathering, the resistant forces decided to strike.[401]

The *Farmville Herald* never printed a word about the meetings themselves or the community reprisals against participants. While group leaders did consciously seek to avoid publicity, the roots of the newspaper's silence go deeper than a simple lack of available information. Any coverage of the Bush League would have poked holes in the *Herald*'s narrative of civility and absolute white unity. Except for the contemporary accounts relayed to Bob Smith by participants and the notations that "he/she participated in the meetings in the woods" that pepper AFSC staff members Harry Boyte and Bill Bagwell's 1962-63 memos to the National Office, the entire movement might have been merely a legend.[402]

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Faithful to its commitment to reconciliation and improving intergroup relations, the AFSC sought to keep the dissenters from the county's chosen course of action from again disappearing underground. Deeply troubled by the fact that that those whites possessing a more moderate point of view were scattered, alienated, and fearful, in 1962,

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[401] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 175-184.

[402] Ibid, p. 183.

the Community Relations Committee significantly reoriented the responsibilities of its on-site staff person. Helen Baker's 1960-61 program focused upon citizenship education and leadership development within the black community, as well as providing services for out-of-school teenagers and helping to administer the placement program. With the realignment, the National Office took over contacts with the black community and the placed students. It instructed the Community Relations Director to facilitate communication between lonely moderates, "provide support and companionship in periods of ostracism and harassment," discover those white persons who might play a constructive part in promoting good public, desegregated schools, and "suggest and open up opportunities for constructive leadership." Or as Irene Osborne, the first AFSC staff member assigned to Farmville, put it, "dig up some liberals."[403]

Though each post-1962 director of the Prince Edward Community Relations Program made a sincere effort to communicate with diehard segregationists and serve as a "listening post" for individuals whose opinions differed from their own, white leaders quickly identified AFSC staff as "agitators," "troublemakers," "communists," and "outsiders." The Board of Supervisors set up a police guard to bar Harry Boyte from a meeting legally required to be open to the public. Vigilantes followed and harassed him. After his departure from the county, they turned their attention to his successor, Nancy Adams. In June 1962, vandals painted a swastika on a building directly across the street from the AFSC office in the Miller Building, frightening Mrs. Miller considerably. As the premier symbol of an outside agitator, Boyte suffered a sexual assault at the hands of

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[403] Fairfax to Bagwell, 5 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38532, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "Progress Report: Community Relations Program in Prince Edward County, Virginia," March 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38165, ibid; Irene Osborne to Barbara Moffett and Jean Fairfax, 9 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, ibid.

a group of vigilantes. Even many opponents of the closings, fearful that contact with an avowedly integrationist group would spark harsh reprisal from the white power structure, initially provided staff members a cool reception. Though assigned to establish contact with moderate members of the white community, Irene Osborne found herself entreated to spare the county's first interracial committee the controversy of her attendance.

Yet AFSC staff persevered despite these obstacles, eventually winning the trust of most moderates, and even a few segregationists, through their expertise and commitment. Community Relations Program staff played a major role in strengthening two interracial discussion groups: the so-called "biracial committee" and the "Christian Social Responsibility Discussion Group," known popularly as the "Field group." Nancy Adams' cajoling profoundly influenced the Field groups' November 1964 decision to incorporate itself as the Prince Edward chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, an affiliate of the Southern Regional Council. They worked with local residents to organize an interracial committee of prominent persons, and with State Senator Edward Haddock, Chairman of the Virginia State Advisory Committee on the Commission of Civil Rights, to encourage key figures in Governor Albertis S. Harrison, Jr.'s administration to apply pressure to county officials.

Community Relations Program staff helped dissenting students at Longwood and Hampden-Sydney sort out their feelings and organize themselves for action, and played a formal advisory role to the Farmville Students Social and Service Club. Throwing themselves into day to day advocacy work, they helped found and assumed the primary leadership role in the Citizens for Public Education (CPE.) For a time the most progressive force in the county, CPE fought for increased funding, better facilities, and an

improved curriculum for the newly reopened schools and campaigned for the return of white students to the public schools. By May 1965, the white President of CPE, a Mississippi native, freely acknowledged that Nancy Adams "has so completely 'identified' with us (both Negro and white and all of us together) that she is automatically considered to be one of us, and is included essentially whenever we employ the pronoun 'we.'"[404]

Battling Repression

It is difficult to understand the sort of fear and repression that paralyzed life in the county and made the task of "providing support and companionship" so crucial. Many moderates lived in fear of militant segregationist Rat Glenn, owner of the Motley Construction Company and one of wealthiest men in the area. Known for his crude intimidation tactics, he threatened individuals who publicly opposed the private school system that "if your mortgage is foreclosed or you find your house burned down some night, you'll change your attitude." John Wilson, manager of the Farmville radio station WFLO, told Bill Bagwell in confidence that Glenn should have been prosecuted for his role in the breakup of the Bush League but no one dared cross him. A difficult man to know, who was rumored to live as a "lone wolf" even from his own family, Glenn played no public role in the controversy aside from a stint on the Foundation board. Many, however, considered him the ultimate power behind the scenes, even more influential than the high-profile J. Barrye Wall, Sr. Rev. Otis McClung of the Farmville Baptist

[404] Carl Walters, Jr. to Fairfax, 5 May 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

Church, himself a segregationist, confided to Bagwell that Glenn, often described as a "hate-monger," was "hated and feared by many" in the community.[405]

His extensive timberland holdings spanned Prince Edward and Amelia Counties and activists charged that he used his large workforce as both informants and enforcers. Ed Peeples noted that:

> I would always see these same guys show up. When I went to Robert Taylor's once, I remember they were standing around in the yard, all around. I thought for a moment I was about to step in on Elijah Mohammad, on the Nation of Islam, but I looked closer and they were all white, but it was exactly the same thing.

Ironically enough, although they never disavowed his actions publicly, the rest of Glenn's family did not necessarily share his views on race or condone his behavior. His daughter, a young woman in her late twenties, once paid Peeples a surprise visit in his VCU office to tell him about her own personal struggle to disassociate herself from her father and his worldview. Perhaps seeking another southern white "apostate" to lean upon, she cried as she described the inherited shame and guilt that dogged her.[406]

In the wake of the breakup of the Bush League, Lester Andrews and Maurice Large's new shopping center suffered an economic boycott. Andrews considered the Farmville Town Council's decision to fix restrictive parking regulations around the complex and place a telephone pole in the midst of the parking area a punitive action to punish the partners for their opposition. He and his wife's social circle disintegrated and his children found themselves snubbed by their friends. As Andrews admitted to Harry Boyte two years later, if retaliation had been directed toward him alone, he would have continued his opposition, but the suffering of his wife and children forced him to curtail

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[405] Bagwell to Fairfax,10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid.

[406] Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 7-8.

his activities. Frustrated and angry, he considered his efforts fruitless. As he told Bob Smith:

> If the type of group we got together could meet with freedom – freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, all those other freedoms the Foundation people say they are trying to preserve – if I could walk down Main Street and feel like I was free to discuss this thing – then we might make some progress. But all the debate is through gossip channels. Any person questioning the idea that we are out of the public school business is subjected to economic and social boycott.[407]

Harry Boyte, a white Quaker who came to the AFSC from the American Red Cross, bringing with him considerable experience with the Greater Atlanta human relations/civil rights community, possessed what Jean Fairfax termed "an amazing capacity to get information out of people."[408] Though in the county less than six months, he interviewed at least sixty whites about their reactions to the closings. From leading segregationists to every member of the Board of Supervisors to college dissenters to poor dirt farmers, he coaxed people to reveal their thoughts on an issue few felt comfortable discussing publicly – an enormous credit to his interpersonal skills. While able to listen quietly to a segregationist diatribe and parse the content for any useful information, he also possessed strong personal opinions and reactions. In a concerted attempt to interact

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[407] Boyte to Fairfax, 6 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38458, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 183-184.

[408] Harry and Janet Chatten Boyte's son, Harry Chatten Boyte, became a leading figure in the emergent field of community organizing throughout the 1960's and 70's. Deeply involved in many of the radical groups of the era, including Students for a Democratic Society, New America Movement, the Southern Student Organizing Committee, and the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, the younger Boyte authored numerous influential books, including *The Backyard Revolution: Understanding the New Citizen Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); *Citizen Action and the New American Populism* (with Heather Booth and Steve Max), (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); and *Building America: The Democratic Promise of Public Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).

with his neighbors in a non-judgmental manner, he often used memos to his supervisors as an outlet for his personal convictions. As he exploded in April 1962:

> I should like to reiterate how cruel and completely unacceptable I find the rigid caste system which is so firmly entrenched in this county. There actually is no discussion carried on publicly in this community which would even stimulate thought, much less bring enlightenment to those persons who have an inherently open mind. It is impossible for so many thousands of white people to be in such unanimous agreement as the power bloc would lead one to believe.[409]

School superintendent T.J. McIlwaine, himself a part of the official power structure through at odds with the continued closing of the schools, agreed with many of these sentiments. Complaining to Boyte that Farmville was "in the midst of an extreme attitude of unAmericanism," he despaired "that it was absolutely impossible for a citizen of this county to take issue with the foundation people and advocate the reopening of the public school system." A timid man by nature, McIlwaine found his position in the crisis nearly unbearable. Caught between the School Board, the Board of Supervisors, the federal courts, his public school loyalties, his fealty to segregation, white sentiment, and black anger, he hung suspended, seemingly paralyzed. As Boyte noted, he believed that "it was almost unbelievable regarding the extent to which anyone who deviates from the proper position could be punished socially and economically." The spectrum of acceptable opinion narrowed to the point that words themselves began to lose their common meaning. As C. Vann Woodward, the dean of southern history, so wryly expressed in 1955, "a 'moderate' became a man who dared open his mouth, an

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[409] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 10; Boyte to Fairfax, 11 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38458, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

'extremist' one who favored eventual compliance with the law, and 'compliance' took on the connotations of treason."[410]

Some African Americans also noted the intimidation of potentially dissident whites into silence. Leslie Francis Griffin told the Civil Rights Commission that:

> We Negroes who live in the county are fully aware that all of the white children and their parents are not satisfied with present conditions in the county: however, every white person who shows any sign of weakening or voices the mildest protest is promptly set up by the power interests of the community. Subtle methods of harassment are being thought up daily to use against white persons who fall out of step with massive resistance.[411]

Vigilantes targeted Harry Boyte for a particularly terrifying – not to mention unsubtle – method of harassment. Two months into his work in the county, a group of thugs assaulted him in the street outside the AFSC office around 1:00 in the morning on his way back from a district court hearing in Richmond. Dressed in burlap hoods, the four white men vowed to "teach [him] a lesson about meddling." Brandishing knives, they forced him to strip, slashed his clothing and made motions as though to cut him. After releasing him, the assailants cruised up and down the street in front of his apartment, calling out derisively, "What's the matter, can't you sleep?" Attempting to protect the AFSC's work in the county, Boyte made a full statement to NAACP attorney S.W. Tucker, on the grounds that describing his attack might encourage other civil rights

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[410] Qtd. in Harry Boyte, Memo to Jean Fairfax, 9 April 1962, ibid; C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955. Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 166.

[411] Transcript, "Commission on Civil Rights Hearing," 25 February 1961, p. 86, 96, NAACP Papers, Part 23, Series A, Reel 47. Also see Vera Allen, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 21 August 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS and Charles Herndon, interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 20 August 1992, transcript, ibid.

workers entering Prince Edward to exercise precautions, but did not report the incident to the police.[412]

For obvious reasons, Boyte never again felt fully comfortable in Farmville and the AFSC pulled him out in August. He returned to Atlanta to spend 1963-1965 with the SCLC, and later took a position with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The National Office assigned South Carolina native Bill Bagwell, a white staff member from the Southeast Regional Office in High Point, NC, to continue Boyte's work with the white community. A veteran of the school desegregation fight, the thirty-nine year old Bagwell possessed a gentle air and an academic bent. He and black colleague Charles Davis directed AFSC's School Desegregation Program, which worked with communities across North Carolina and southside Virginia to end tokenism and achieve racially balanced schools. Bagwell took on responsibility for Prince Edward on top of his other school desegregation work and did not reside in the county full-time. However, he continued to circle the rounds of the moderate community, alternatively encouraging, organizing and cajoling.[413]

While searching for someone willing to go to Farmville for a long-term assignment (Prince Edward was not the most popular assignment on the civil rights map), Jean Fairfax met a beautiful (often described as "stunning") young white woman named Nancy Adams doing voter registration work in Jackson, Mississippi. A graduate of the University of North Carolina, who studied at Vassar and did graduate work at the

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[412] Harry G. Boyte, Statement, 24 May 1962, NAACP Papers, Part 24, Series B, Reel 27; Boyte to S.W. Tucker, 24 May 1962, ibid.

[413] "Prince Edward County Gets New AFSC Agent," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 October 1962.

University of Miami Law School, Adams was, in Fairfax's words, "a very able person, intellectually and academically." A member of a wealthy, prominent Miami family, she broke with her southern background to embrace civil rights work. Quickly realizing that Adams' mental agility, boundless energy, excellent rapport with black activists, and good listening skills made her a perfect candidate for the Prince Edward position, Fairfax began to drop hints regarding the staff vacancy in the county. As she noted years later, "I really had to twist her arm," but Adams eventually caved.[414]

Adams arrived in Farmville to take on the role of Community Relations Director in March 1964. Charged with "developing the spirit of constructive compliance in the white community" and promoting a quality, integrated public school system, she renewed the contacts made under Osborne, Boyte, and Bagwell and set about developing new ones of her own. She remained in Prince Edward until the closing of the AFSC office a year and a half later. Throwing herself into both the black activist community and the white moderates' circle, she assembled coalitions, arranged events, planned confrontations with the segregationist leadership, and regularly "pumped up" fatalistic and backsliding moderates. Yet despite the depth of her involvement, she nonetheless retained a sense of professional objectivity that allowed her to reflect and write critically on the state of

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[414] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 7, 11; "Representative for American Friends Service Committee Here," *Farmville Herald*, n.d., 1964 Box, Folder 38580, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Connie Curry, "Opening Closed Doors: Narrative of the American Friends Service Committee's Work in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1959-1965," p. 19, Hhttp://webarchive.afsc.org/archives/princeedward/openingcloseddoorsPec

affairs in the county. Former staff member Connie Curry termed her "a participant observer in the best sense of that term."[415]

According to Jean Fairfax, "she was one tough gal...you don't expect someone who looks almost like a debutante to be as tough as she was." She quickly became confidante and mentor to a group of dissenting Longwood College students, who adored her, and a close friend to Rev. Griffin, whom she respected enormously. Both Griffin and Adams read voraciously, loved to debate ideas, and enjoyed each other's company. Adams' uncanny ability to discern local needs and lift work off Griffin's shoulders further strengthened their relationship. Helen Baker found her profoundly refreshing. As she wrote her family soon after Adams' arrival in the county, "I sat marveling over and over about what heavenly power created such a person as she is out of her very southern and not at all liberal background. She gave me fuel for keeping on."[416]

The Main Characters

In February 1960, Jean Fairfax wrote Community Relations Division Secretary Barbara Moffett about a few stand-out whites whom she hoped might eventually, with encouragement and assistance, become the basis of a resistance movement in the white community. Small in number though they were, Fairfax drew encouragement from the fact that they dared raise their voices. A look at what became of the individuals mentioned by 1965 is instructive, for it illuminates the major courses of action open to

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[415] Connie Curry, "Opening Closed Doors," p. 19; Fairfax to L.F. Griffin, 28 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38598, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[416] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 11; Helen Baker to Family, 29 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38577, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

white southern moderates: exodus; cooption by the white power structure; a retreat into silence; continued advocacy of a moderate point of view; and full-fledged conversion to egalitarianism and activism.[417]

Longwood professor Richard Meeker topped Fairfax's list. "There was recently in the newspaper a letter to the editor by Richard Meeker of Longwood College," she wrote, "in which he stated very strongly that the Negro wants only justice, that segregation is on its way out and that he hopes that he can help its abolition." Meeker, a New Jersey native who prior to the AFSC's arrival in the county was considered too liberal to be included in the "biracial committee," continued to courageously speak his mind until leaving the area in August 1962 for a position at the University of Buffalo. Once involved with the moderates' coalition, Meeker stepped up his letter writing campaign, became a PECCA donor, and challenged some of the more conservative white dissidents to rethink their grounds for opposition. He also took on the conservative Longwood president, Francis Lankford, criticizing his refusal to align himself with the moderate forces in the county and his heavy-handed attempts to blunt debate among the students. Two years later, Meeker's future at Longwood hung in tatters. His clashes with Lankford strained their relationship to the breaking point. The university denied him a promotion, and the president replaced him as literary advisor to the student newspaper due to the publication of several articles Lankford found in "questionable taste." As his

[417] Fairfax to Moffett, 11 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

oldest daughter approached school age, he and his wife remained adamant that no child of theirs would attend Prince Edward Academy.[418]

Fairfax also possessed high hopes for Annie Putney, writing that, "a Mrs. Putney, member of an old family, a masseuse, and her daughter have stated that a community without schools is an ignorant community which they would not care to live in." Once described by Nancy Adams as "a doll," Putney was an outspoken "long time liberal," one of the county's first New Dealers. She assisted Harry Boyte with the preliminary contacts for a larger, more visible interracial commission to supersede the original "biracial" committee deriving from discussions between black leaders and white academics, namely C.G. Gordon Moss and Henry Bittinger. Fiercely opposed to the private schools, supportive of integration, and espousing the belief that "people are people regardless of color of skin," Putney served on the Executive Board of Citizens for Public Education and as chairman of both the Membership and Organization Committee and the County Finances Committee. In 1962, she waged an unsuccessful bid for Farmville Town Council. A regular at the Supervisors' annual budget hearing, she spoke out in 1959 against the previous day's decision not to levy school taxes, and in 1963 against the continued absence of public school appropriations. At the 1964 hearing, a month after the *Griffin* decision, she joined at least fourteen other whites and ten blacks, most of whom possessed strong ties to the AFSC project, in speaking in favor of the

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[418] Ibid; Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 5 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 27 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 3 June 1962, ibid.

School Board's request for $339,000 in local funds. Going beyond many of her compatriots, she urged whites to return to the public schools en masse.[419]

Despite her firm convictions and willingness to take risks, several liabilities weakened Putney's effectiveness as a community leader. Although well-respected by most Prince Edward blacks and a member of one of the county's oldest families, Bill Bagwell noted that, "as to how much of a community leader she actually is, it seems debatable. Some persons say her views and ideas are liberal, but that she has no appreciable following in the community." Health struggles complicated her involvement in the struggle, and both Harry Boyte and Nancy Adams suspected that her husband and son exerted a conservative influence over her actions. Though one of the county's most outspoken advocates of public education, she failed to campaign actively for the town council seat and did not make any pro-public schools statements during the pre-election period, a reticence Boyte ascribed to her family's preference that she remain merely a name on the ballot.[420]

Though S. Waverly Putney, Jr. held more conservative beliefs than his mother (preferred segregation and sent his children to the Foundation Schools), Annie Putney's

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[419] Fairfax to Moffett, 11 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, ibid; Nancy Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 23 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Fairfax to Boyte, 15 June 1962, ibid; "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," n.d., 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; Adams to Dorothy Bucklin and Elizabeth Miller, 5 January 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 18 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 3 June 1959, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 4 June 1963, ibid.

[420] Bagwell to Fairfax, 18 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 14 June 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

influence can be seen in his willingness to speak out in support of public education and publicize the economic cost of the closings. He was a Bush Leaguer, and in later years chaired a Lions Club committee charged with enticing new industries to come to the county. When two companies once seriously considering Prince Edward declined, Putney's conviction that closed schools impeded economic development strengthened considerably.[421]

Yet his status as a small business owner left him vulnerable to economic pressure: business dropped off in the wake of his public declaration of support for reopening the schools and Rat Glenn reported the Putney Plumbing and Heating Company to the federal government in 1962 for operating in violation of federal wage and hour laws. Both Putneys thought the charges inexplicable and groundless, interpreting them as retaliation against his efforts and her activism. Though neither allowed Glenn's actions to squelch their dissent, Bill Bagwell noted that "she hesitates to become too vocal on the subject because she knows her son can be hurt." Concern for the family business clearly impeded the full development of Annie Putney's potential for leadership.[422]

Fairfax also made note of "a Miss Wright, a teacher at Longwood, who made a very strong statement against the legality of the plan to sell the white high school." Along with Annie Putney's daughter, Grace, Wright faded into the background, internalizing her dissent, reconciling herself to the Board of Supervisor's actions, or quietly leaving the county. Neither Grace Putney nor "Miss Wright" appear to have ever

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[421] Bagwell to Fairfax, 1 October 1962, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 12 November 1962, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 1 October 1962, ibid; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 245.

[422] Bagwell to Fairfax, 18 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 23 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

again publicly identified themselves with the moderate point of view. After asking members of the black community their opinion of certain whites considered "moderate," Fairfax added Dr. and Mrs. Frank Crawford to her list of potential leaders. "I gather that Dr. and Mrs. F.R. Crawford, former missionaries to China, and very active churchmen, have retired from the scene and are not saying much now," she commented, "although they have had the reputation for being concerned and liberal."[423]

Throughout the crisis, the Crawfords criticized the closings but never became major players in the opposition forces. Though both attended the "biracial" committee and held membership in Citizens for Public Education, Mrs. Crawford took a more active role than her husband, who succumbed to cynicism that nothing short of a court order could have any effect on the situation in the county. Convinced that the local black population was "controlled" by the NAACP, Crawford subscribed to the popular segregationist belief that blacks cared little about desegregation, but were being used as pawns by manipulative NAACP officials. Mrs. Crawford, on the other hand, known across the county for her willingness to associate with African Americans, took a more advanced position on race, commenting ruefully to Irene Osborne that "they tolerate it from me, thinking I am queer because I lived in China." Like Annie Putney, she spoke at the June 1964 budget hearing. Though seemingly willing to move out in front of her physician husband, Mrs. Crawford was in her seventies, did not know the majority of the younger leaders, and took no leadership role in any focused campaigns or committees. Both considered the black community's use of demonstrations in summer 1963 "disgusting," convinced that they accomplished nothing and unnecessarily alienated

[423] Fairfax to Moffett, 11 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, ibid.

whites. Ultimately, the Crawfords retreated into conviction that nothing could be accomplished until local church leadership exerted itself and retired from action completely.[424]

Of Longwood College dean C.G. Gordon Moss, Fairfax wrote that he "is considered to be a segregationist with a conscience; he is concerned about the injustice in the situation but he is not willing to go all the way toward integration." Ultimately, however, Moss proved her wrong, undergoing the greatest metamorphosis of any of the early moderates and growing into the county's most outspoken white dissenter. The professor served as the force behind the "biracial" committee, played an active role in Citizens for Public Education - sitting on the County Finances Committee - and convinced the Field group to affiliate with the Virginia Human Relations Council. He antagonized the Board of Supervisors by rarely missing an opportunity to appear before the group to voice his opposition, initially to the closings, and after the resumption of public education, to the inadequacies of the budget. His determination to speak his mind to members of the press and tell the story as he saw it in a variety of speaking engagements irrevocably disrupted both his personal and professional life.[425]

Determined that none of his children would ever attend the Foundation Schools, Moss sent his thirteen year old son Dickie to a prep school in Richmond for four years, much against the boy's wishes. In the fall of 1963, when the Prince Edward County Free

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[424] Bagwell to Fairfax, 17 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid; "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," n.d., 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 4 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, ibid; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 31 March 1964, ibid.

[425] Fairfax to Moffett, 11 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, ibid.

Schools, a federally-initiated, state-sponsored, privately-financed educational institution, opened their doors in the county, Dickie chose to return home to integrate the senior class at Moton High. Ostracized by all his old friends at the Academy and one of only eight white students in the entire Free School system, he had a difficult senior year. Yet he later explained to Superintendent Neil Sullivan that, "It was something I could do for my dad. He's been fighting this battle for a long time."[426]

Moss's dissent from the racial and educational status quo nearly cost him his job. Multiple petitions to the State Board of Education called for his removal and segregationists complained about the presence of a "fringe radical" on the state payroll. R.O. Walker of Suffolk queried in the *Farmville Herald* in November 1962, "Why doesn't Dr. Moss resign his position at Longwood or get a job in a place more to his liking, where he can spend all of his time integrating the races. He holds an important position with a State college, and I don't see why we, the taxpayers, should have to support Dr. Moss in his tirades." The Board of Education warned him in early 1961 that his actions reflected negatively on the college, and if not curtailed, might result in dismissal. Nevertheless, he retained his position. Some ascribed his continued employment to a startling defense of academic freedom offered by afore-mentioned Longwood President Frank Lankford. Moss himself believed that a well-timed, nationally-circulated story in the *Saturday Evening Post* about the pressures applied to

[426] Neil V. Sullivan, Superintendent, Prince Edward Free School Association, Memo to James Cooley and Thomas Maynard, 10 December 1963, Box 18, Folder 2, Series IV: Office of the Superintendent, Prince Edward Free School Association Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, VSU; Sullivan, p. 23, 96, 207.

Prince Edward dissidents, highlighting the travails of an unnamed professor, provided the insulation necessary to safeguard his job.[427]

However, he found himself muzzled on campus. When Lankford took a leave of absence in June 1962, the chairman of the Board of Education refused to bring Moss's name before the group as a potential candidate for the position of acting president, despite the fact that precedent and university custom called for the appointment of the Academic Dean. Two years later, Nancy Adams reported to Jean Fairfax and Barbara Moffett:

> Dr. Moss is awfully low; the college has refused to allow him to teach in his field (American History) and has assigned him for the rest of his days a freshman world history survey (1 class); the sort of thing graduate students generally handle for full professors. He feels it is a real academic embarrassment.

While the *Saturday Evening Post* article might have saved his job, it could not protect him from the day-to-day barbs, obstructions, and humiliations accompanying his dissident status. As a scholar, he smarted under the college's attempt to embarrass him before his colleagues, while as a born teacher, he mourned the loss of valuable and meaningful time in the classroom.[428]

Similar patterns repeated themselves within his church, perhaps accentuated by Barrye Wall's presence as an influential co-parishioner at Johns Memorial Episcopal. In the wake of Moss's attendance at the 1961 annual meeting of the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity, his church community branded him a "total integrationist" and removed him from his position on the vestry. A few months later, the congregation

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[427] R.O. Walker, "Moss Should Join NAACP Forces," *Farmville Herald*, 27 November 1962; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 216-221.

[428] Boyte to Fairfax, 30 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Fairfax, 17 September 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

revoked his office as church treasurer. He sat alone in his pew every Sunday, a virtual outcast from white society, and could not venture downtown without the expectation of being "snubbed on Main Street by virtually lifelong friends." A sensitive, courtly man often described as "a gentle and very compassionate human being – one of those individuals who happened to be born with natural humanitarian impulses," Moss held a lifelong sympathy for the underdog. A native Virginian – born in Lynchburg, educated at Washington & Lee, and married to a Farmville girl – he deeply resented segregationists' constant attempts to frame him as an outsider.[429]

Regardless of the pains he and his family endured, Harry Boyte noted in amazement that "one cannot detect any evidence of any sign of littleness or bitterness or hostility toward anyone in his mind or heart." Even those who knew him well continued to marvel at his courage. In the midst of a rant against apathy at Longwood, Helen Baker broke off to acknowledge, "Of course, there is always dear, valiant Dean Moss, who is by now a social outcast because he has spoken up for public schools and human decency. He came over to see me this weekend, and as usual, I was tongue-tied in the presence of so great a person."[430]

When asked what motivated his decision to buck the white power structure, Moss often pointed out that, "I've been teaching American history for forty years. I've been teaching that democracy and social justice are the greatest ideals of the American nation. I'd be a traitor to the thousands of students I've taught if I didn't take a stand for these

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[429] Schuler and Green: 28-40; Boyte to Fairfax, 30 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 214.

[430] Boyte to Fairfax, 30 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Helen Baker to Family, 29 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38577, ibid.

ideals when the opportunity comes." And take a stand he did, writing a barrage of letters to Barrye Wall at the *Farmville Herald* and discussing his convictions with anyone who would listen. He also pursued discussions with black leadership; unlike most whites, acknowledging Rev. Griffin as the real leader of the black community and communicating with him directly. A reliable thorn in the side of the Board of Supervisors, Moss never missed an opportunity to voice his dissent at the annual budget hearing, even the year he and his friend Henry Bittinger spoke alone. 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962 – he never missed a year.[431]

In 1963, he was out of town, but sent a letter registering his "continued, confirmed, and strengthened opinion that the Board of Supervisors in doing the people of Prince Edward County a grave disservice in not providing for public schools." In deep-seated frustration, he noted wryly that, "there is nothing new that I can say that would add to my thrice repeated statements to you on this subject." In 1964, he returned to speak in favor of the School Board budget. Yet regardless of the fact that everyone connected in any way to the crisis considered him the most courageous and morally upright white person in the county, he continually downplayed his own role. As he told the Charlottesville Human Relations Council in 1962, "I am not the only white person in Prince Edward County who is violently opposed to what is going on...There are really many others. I am simply the most garrulous of the oppositionists."[432]

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[431] Sullivan, p. 21-23; Schuler and Green: 28-40.

[432] Board of Supervisors Minutes, 4 June 1963. Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 5 June 1964, ibid; C.G. Gordon Moss, Address to the Charlottesville Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, 25 October 1962. 1962 Box, Folder 38220, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

As early as August 1960, Irene Osborne reported to Jean Fairfax that "it is clear that Dr. Moss is way beyond his friends, and yet not quite prepared to take the leap of tying in with people who are stronger. This, I am sure, is where AFSC can be a real help to him." Moss's transformation derived from new friendships with African Americans, increased awareness of the daily humiliations inherent in segregation, and an intrinsic humanitarianism noted by all who encountered him. Increased exposure to white liberals and civil rights activists and rising resentment toward the stifling climate of repression hanging over Farmville also contributed. Yet the incessant support and encouragement he received from AFSC staffers such as Osborne, Helen Baker, Harry Boyte, Bill Bagwell, Jean Fairfax, and Nancy Adams also played an invaluable role in buoying him up in periods of discouragement, propelling him to greater action, and challenging his thinking on race. By 1963, he moved far beyond his original concern for the public schools, arguing that "the real issue has grown beyond the mere question of integration to nothing more nor less than whether or not white people are going to accept Negroes as fellow human beings."[433]

Conversations with Osborne and Boyte appear to have influenced his perception of the appropriate role for the "biracial" committee, leading to his embrace of the concept of a larger, more visible, action-oriented group that welcomed individuals in the past considered too liberal, outspoken, controversial, etc. for inclusion. When the issue turned to the quality of the re-opened public schools, Nancy Adams railed against the "hopelessness and timidity exhibited in the face of the powers that be." She noted in a letter to Jean Fairfax that in a recent meeting, "Dr. Moss entered the only original

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[433] Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 9 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, ibid; Schuler and Green: 28-40.

approach, which was to utilize the 'appeal' of the situation in 'selling' to teachers the Prince Edward situation." He and Adams together valiantly argued for a plan of teacher recruitment, but the committee deemed them unrealistic, concluding little more than basic education could be expected of the public schools.[434]

Bill Bagwell wrote in October 1962 that:

> He seems to have grown considerably in his social outlook since I first met him in February 1960. Even yet, he is probably not an ardent integrationist, but his views on race have become considerably more liberal than they were in 1960, when public schools seemed to be his chief concern and race was a matter about which he had something of a paternalistic view.

Moss continued to grow in leaps and bounds throughout the next two years, welcoming black worshippers coming to integrate the Episcopal church into his pew during the 1963 demonstrations, flirting with joining the NAACP, and embracing Dickie's decision to attend the Free Schools. Perceptive and attuned to the changes sweeping the country – and Prince Edward's place in them – he wrote in 1963:

> Ever since Birmingham, I have struggled to discover what should be my part if 'demonstration' becomes the final effort of Prince Edward negroes [sic] to achieve their rightful status as human beings and American citizens. Since I have my freedom, having been born with it by my accident of birth with a white skin, this problem necessarily becomes for me not freedom, but responsibility...However distasteful conspicuous action may be to me, however abhorrent peaceful action which may produce violent counteraction may be to me – I have no choice.[435]

While Moss's growing liberalism proved a pleasant surprise for AFSC staff, his colleague Henry Bittinger, judged by Fairfax to be "more open than Dr. Moss" on the question of integration, proved a disappointment. Moss and Bittinger originally intended

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[434] Adams to Fairfax, 31 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

[435] Bagwell to Fairfax, 29 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 222-224; Statement of C.G.Gordon Moss, 21 July 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

the invitation-only biracial committee to "restore and maintain lines of communication between the White and Colored citizens of Prince Edward County," and serve as a buffer against the threat of outside interference. Bristling with traditional southern hostility toward "abolitionists," "carpetbaggers," and "outside agitators," the white organizers forcefully stated "our desire to solve our own problems," politely requesting "interested organizations outside" to keep their interest to themselves. The Longwood professors' first proposal to black leaders asked for agreement to a three year period of voluntary segregation in exchange for a pledge to reopen the schools. Moss quickly grew beyond this gradualist and insular approach, but Bittinger resolutely clung to his original position despite changing circumstances.[436]

He greeted AFSC staff members with suspicion. When Irene Osborne entered the county in the summer of 1960 to set up the AFSC field office, committee members initially extended her an invitation to attend their meetings. The group met in a small room attached to black member Anita Spencer's grocery store on an unpaved rural road twelve miles from Farmville – a remote location preferred by the white members. Attend she did on July 5, writing later to her supervisors that the group seemed polarized and unsure how to proceed. Moss, Griffin, and the other black attendees immediately accepted her as a member, but Bittinger waylaid her in the hallway and "laid on heavy the 'outsiders have no business being here' routine." Maneuvering behind the scenes, he revoked her invitation to future meetings, responding to black members' queries as to her whereabouts with the statement that the group should be closed to outsiders. Arguing that

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[436] Fairfax to Moffett, 11 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, ibid; Moss, Charlottesville Address, 25 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38220, ibid; "Purpose of Our Discussion," September 1959, 1962 Box, Folder 38435, ibid.

"you know people are going to call her a Communist, even though we all know AFSC is not a Communist organization," he alienated many African American members with his high-handed exclusivity. At his next encounter with Osborne, Bittinger alluded to the inescapable climate of repression suffusing the county – "he knows AFSC will be labeled subversive and worse, and he can't afford the guilt by association which would undoubtedly follow…he followed this by much charming, telling me what a lovely person I am."[437]

Two years later, a frustrated Harry Boyte, who never felt sincerely welcomed by Bittinger, told Jean Fairfax that the professor was not a constructive influence in the group:

> I would expect that Mr. Bittinger carries over to his friends in the white community comments which are made at this bi-racial meeting. I have the impression that he is by nature an individual of little strength and finds it necessary for his emotional security to be accepted by the white community. I further would imagine that if the conversations within this bi-racial group began to develop a more militant tone, Mr. Bittinger soon would drop out of the group.[438]

The "individual of little strength" assessment was perhaps unfair; Bittinger, after all, bravely voiced his opposition to the majority at Jarman Hall. Pleading such an unpopular position before an impassioned crowd of nearly 1300 of one's neighbors demanded a great deal of courage. So did his speaking out at the Board of Supervisors' June 1959 and June 1961 budget hearings, where his opinion was again very much in the minority.

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[437] Boyte to Fairfax, 12 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 4 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, ibid; Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 9 August 1960, ibid.

[438] Boyte to Fairfax, 12 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438. ibid.

At the 1961 session, Bittinger and Moss provided the only white opposition to the Supervisors' policy.[439]

Nevertheless, Boyte's concern over the professor's desire for acceptance from the white community possessed some validity. At one especially memorable May 1962 meeting of the biracial group, Bittinger mystified everyone present by his repeated assurances that the Supervisors had decided to vote in their June meeting to reopen the schools in the fall. According to Boyte, "he made this statement so frequently, and at the same time with such apparent knowledge, that we were convinced he was speaking for the power group." Despite having never formed a particularly favorable impression of the professor, Boyte did admit that white leaders could be using Bittinger as a go-between. All in all, however, he suspected that they were deliberately disseminating false information "in an effort to lull certain segments of the county into a false sense of hope in order that efforts toward the development of a countywide organization may be delayed."[440]

Casting himself in the role of mediator between "extremists" on both sides, Bittinger fell into the classic pattern of the moderate: equating the reformers with the resistance and obeying the Supreme Court with defying it. Like others who assigned themselves this role, he excused his own inaction with repeated explanations of the futility of resistance. Bill Bagwell found himself unimpressed with Bittinger's reasoning:

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[439] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 122; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 3 June 1959, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 9 June 1961, ibid.

[440] Boyte to Fairfax, 15 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 21 May 1962, ibid.

> He talks very well in analyzing the situation and the people involved, but he seems almost too smug with his analysis of the present and the future, and what he sees himself as doing. He says that he believes in principles but he likes to think of himself as being practical and does not want to get out on a limb so far that he is all alone. In this last statement, I suspect that he is being critical of Dr. Moss, although no names were mentioned.[441]

Though Nancy Adams deemed the biracial committee "steeped in hopelessness," commenting that it would "probably not be more than a vehicle for mutual lamentation," its existence – and Bittinger's involvement – extended into 1964. While acknowledging that he could be jovial and friendly, Adams described him as generally patronizing toward black members of the committee, frequently employing sarcasm that he apparently expected to go over their heads. In all fairness to Bittinger, with the exception of Moss, none of the members of the white contingent impressed Adams. Nonetheless, Bagwell's impressions of inaction bear out in the fact that, expect for his attendance at meetings of the biracial committee, Bittinger fades out of the picture after 1963. He played no role in the Field group or Citizens for Public Education and does not appear to have ever spoken out in support of a stronger budget or an enhanced remedial curriculum for the reopened schools.[442]

Finally, Emanuel Weinberg, a member of Prince Edward's only Jewish family, makes no further appearance in the AFSC's files after Jean Fairfax's memo describing him as "a friendly person who would like to help but who feels his position is too vulnerable." He never publicly identified himself with the moderate community or participated in any of the interracial groups. Yet he was the first merchant in Farmville to hire a black salesclerk, which cost him two long-term employees, and practically the only

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[441] Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid.

[442] Adams to Fairfax, 20 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

property owner willing to rent office space to the Free School Association. Telling Free School Superintendent Neil Sullivan that "anybody who plans to get upset about such things already *is* upset," despite many reservations, Weinberg agreed to rent his building with the comment that "somebody should rent office space to you people."[443] Though AFSC staffers made several attempts to spark what they termed "a merchants' revolt," they ultimately had little success in inspiring the business community to collective action. The existence of quiet business moderates such as Weinberg is a reminder that not every individual who harbored moderate sympathies, including some who proved willing to put them into practice, chose to associate with AFSC-supported projects.

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The decision to locate the AFSC office and staff apartment in a black neighborhood proved highly controversial in the white community. Though the N.P. Millers, the Friends' landlords throughout their tenancy in the county, were initially uneasy about community response to interracial use of their building, they did not equate having a few white tenants with overthrowing the entire social structure of the South. Many white moderates did, and their resentment of white AFSC staff's residential accommodations created another barrier against trust and/or acceptance. Both black and white AFSC representatives made their home in the Miller Building, and staffers such as Helen Baker, who could not be charged with interracial living, often received more

[443] Fairfax to Moffett, 11 February 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38119, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Sullivan, p. 79.

community acceptance than whites such as Irene Osborne, Nancy Adams, and Harry Boyte.[444]

During her first few weeks in the county, a white member of the biracial committee cornered Osborne to inform her that staying with a black family would mark her as an integrationist. Threatening to withdraw from the committee, Elizabeth Burger explained, "I could not associate with you since I am trying so hard to say that I believe in public schools even though I also believe in segregation. And here you are practicing interracial living. If you are going to be a part of the biracial group, I will not be able to continue, as guilt by association is sure to operate." Four years later, Farmville native and Free School business manager Bill Baldwin advised Adams to curtail her activities within the black community, saying that "he had heard it said, 'Miss Adams is here to help us with our problem,' and that it was answered, 'she seems to be interested in only one side of the question.'" In typical AFSC fashion, Adams replied that her residential choices consciously illustrated the possibility of maintaining contacts in both communities.[445]

Harry Boyte responded to similar charges/inquiries by pointing out that occupying an apartment in the Miller Building "made it unnecessary to go into any discussion at all about my personal commitment or the commitment of a representative of the Service

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[444] Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 4 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 26 March 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

[445] Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 4 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

Committee in racial relationships."[446] For an organization so committed to interracialism and breaking down the walls that divide human beings from each other, arranging for living quarters in the white community for its white staffers would have seemed an unthinkable compromise with injustice. Yet the question remains whether acting in accordance with its ideals hindered the AFSC's effectiveness in the white community. Ultimately, however, those offended by the living arrangements of its staff members were probably too conservative to associate with them regardless of residential address.

The extent to which a small group of white civic and business leaders maintained near complete control over county affairs, effectively squelching all challenges to the status quo, has been much discussed by both contemporaries and historians.[447] The idea of a "power group" pulling the strings behind the scenes stood at the center of the AFSC's conception of the situation in the county. Again and again, staff members asserted that a substantial number, perhaps even a majority, of citizens favored the resumption of public education, but found themselves too intimidated and entrapped to organize themselves into a substantial opposition force. Moderate/liberal members of the college communities emphatically corroborated this image of domination by the few. One told Harry Boyte that the affairs of the county "are in the control of fewer than a half dozen individuals," who were wealthy but comparatively uneducated.[448]

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[446] Boyte to Fairfax, 6 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

[447] See especially Amy E. Murrell, "The 'Impossible' Prince Edward Case: The Endurance of Resistance in a Southside County, 1959-64," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167.

[448] Boyte to Fairfax, 7 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Hampden-Sydney Professor of Religion Charles McRae believed that these individuals' educational deficiencies predisposed their lack of concern for the educational opportunities of others. Fannie B. Shorter, a member of one of the county's most aristocratic families, told Harry Boyte that her representative on the Board of Supervisors had not attended school, could only write his own name, and read at a first grade level. Shorter charged that more educated residents of the county, who had long distanced themselves from local politics, were now reaping the penalties of allowing such "people as those Supervisors" to control county affairs.[449]

The two men most often considered the "silent voices of power" in the area were the afore-mentioned C.W. ("Rat") Glenn and J.W. Dunnington, a 71 year old tobacconist who maintained that he had retired from involvement in county affairs. Other individuals generally recognized as members of the power group included Barrye Wall; his oldest son, attorney J. Barrye Wall, Jr.; Robert Taylor, owner of Taylor Manufacturing; B. Blanton Hanbury, PESF President and owner of Buffalo Shook Company; E. Louis Dahl, owner of the Farmville Army-Navy Store; and Charles Gates, the Lockett member of the Board of Supervisors. Harry Boyte summarized the group's general political orientation in the phrase "anti-United Nations, anti-floridation [sic], impeach Earl Warren campaigns, and support of the far-right contention that an international conspiracy has virtually captured our federal government."[450]

Lester Andrews asserted that members of the power group, J. Barrye Wall in particular, possessed a "dictatorial complex." Andrews attributed the group's ability to

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[449] Ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 27 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[450] Boyte to Fairfax, 12 April 1962, ibid.

trigger reprisals massive enough to "keep the entire community in line" to members' controlling interest in local banks, ensuring command over business and home mortgages. The manager of Farmville's radio station (WFLO), John Wilson, who had no lost love for Barrye Wall, went so far as to suggest that county elites had deliberately launched a battle against progress on multiple fronts in order to preserve their own privileged status. Convinced that "they are opposed to new industry and business and growth of the town because such would bring competition for them," Wilson charged men such as Wall, Glenn, and Hanbury with imposing stagnation upon the county to preserve their own economic and political power. Hampden-Sydney professor Tyler Miller agreed, arguing that the power bloc deliberately created "racial and school havoc" in order to discourage new industries from entering the area and increasing labor competition.[451]

Characteristically, Gordon Moss went still further, accusing the power group of using the *Brown* decision and the push for school desegregation as an excuse to pursue a long-cherished goal of ending public education. Delivering his indictment with the zeal of an Old Testament prophet, in a 1962 speech to the Charlottesville Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, Moss blazed:

> [The] primary purpose is to destroy public education for both, yes, the Negro children of the county, but also the white children of the county in order that they might retain an unlimited cheap labor supply for the few, for the industries of the county. That, I believe, explains the fact, the depth and the length that people in the county have been willing to go to, to accomplish their purposes...The adamant, the prolonged, the indefinite resistance to integrated public schools in our county, I believe, owes its existence and its length of existence to this, this

[451] Boyte to Fairfax, 6 July 1962, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid; Nancy Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

> belief on the part of the wealthier part of the population that they can get along better without public education.[452]

The Charlottesville speech did little to endear Moss to those whose motivations he so unflatteringly questioned, and many disagreed with his diagnosis of the underlying motivation for the closings, writing it off as the ravings of a radical. Yet his analysis of the situation logically extended the line of thought promoted by the more "temperate" John Wilson. If the power group was willing to defend its interests at the cost of county-wide economic and social stagnation, would it pause at chipping away at free education for the lower classes? Southern white elites, after all, had a long history of manipulating racial prejudice to serve their own class interests, utilizing the rhetoric of racial solidarity to enlist poorer whites in the defense of economic inequality.

Harry Boyte, who frequently fell back upon Henry David Thoreau and modern social theorists to help him understand the dynamics of social control in Prince Edward, admitted that many of the characteristics of the white community were typical of southern rural areas. Yet he maintained that "the dominant and almost unbelievable and certainly unique factor here is the virtually complete control of the white community by very, very few individuals. Invariably, these individuals who control events of this county and the behavior of the white community are native-born and are large landholders." Bill Bagwell noted that the abolishment of the county school tax tended to disproportionately benefit members of the power group, commenting that "there is reason

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[452] Moss, Charlottesville Address, 1962 Box, Folder 38220, ibid.

to believe that the old theory of aristocracy and government of an elite few dominates the thinking of this group."[453]

The truth of this observation is borne out in only two of many examples of what Nancy Adams referred to as "the democratic process in action Prince Edward style." In April 1962, Boyte attended a Board of Supervisors meeting. Though the body either forgot or deliberately neglected to publicize the meeting time on WFLO or in the *Herald*, one of Boyte's sources informed him that the Supervisors would discuss the 1962-1963 public school budget. As the only member of the general public in attendance, Boyte's presence caused obvious consternation, and Board members asked him at least four times if he had a matter he would like to take up with the Supervisors. The group broke for lunch before considering the budget, announcing that the meeting would reconvene at 1:00 pm in the Supervisors' Conference Room in the county courthouse. When Boyte returned at 1:00, he found only an empty room. Upon finally locating the Supervisors in a private office in another building, a police guard turned him back when he tried to enter. The Board did not emerge until 3:00 pm, after conducting the entire discussion of the budget in secret.[454]

Three years later, Citizens for Public Education appeared before the school board to make a presentation carefully scheduled and confirmed with Superintendent McIlwaine. Upon arrival at the courthouse, board members kept the delegation waiting an hour while they consulted the school laws of Virginia to see if citizens' groups must

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[453] Boyte to Fairfax, 12 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 1 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid.

[454] Boyte to Fairfax, 10 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

be admitted to school board meetings. As Nancy Adams recounted, "They found that it was not mandatory, but that their minutes were supposed to have been made public all along, so they decided the best plan would be to admit our group." Members then ushered the thirty CPE representatives into a cramped room, forcing them to stand before the seated members of the board for another hour while the body conducted its other business. Board members then subjected the delegation to much hostile questioning, providing the group only five minutes in which to present its report. Accusing the concerned parents of wasting the school board's time, they dismissed the group with the assurance that the board was "working in the interest of all the children."[455]

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Though primarily charged with ferreting out potential moderates, in hopes of eventually encouraging cross-community dialogue, Harry Boyte also strove to open the lines of communication with county leadership. He insisted that "the so-called opinion makers of the county need very badly someone from the outside with whom they can discuss this problem...to have the opportunity to verbalize without running the risk of local criticism of the power structure." In this capacity, he tracked down every sitting member of the Board of Supervisors, all but one of whom were farmers and lifelong Prince Edward residents. Though each accorded him a different response – some attempting to justify their actions more than others – all insisted that integration in the schools would plunge the county into irrevocable turmoil.[456]

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[455] Adams to Fairfax, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

[456] Boyte to Fairfax, 26 March 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

Chairman William W. Vaughan and John Steck, Managing Editor of the *Farmville Herald* and J.B. Wall's northern protégé, received Boyte hospitably. Over an afternoon fishing expedition to Vaughan's lake, the Community Relations Director probed the chairman's attitudes, ultimately characterizing him as a classic segregationist committed to preventing integration by keeping the schools closed. Nonetheless, Vaughan worried deeply over the Foundation budget and the strained finances among whites resulting from Judge Lewis's injunction against the use of tuition funds in Prince Edward County.[457]

Consequently, the chairman confided, he intended to ask the Board at its next meeting (April 3, 1962) to approve the reopening of the schools for fall 1962, but admitted freely that if such an action did not prompt Lewis to remove the injunction, he would encourage the Board to rescind the decision. The motion did not carry a majority at the meeting, and Lewis ruled that week to extend the ban. Nevertheless, a sense of assurance that the schools would reopen in the fall pervaded the county throughout the summer of 1962, heightened by the judge's July 25 decision terming the closings a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The NAACP's Roy Wilkins lauded Lewis's clear statement that "the public schools of Prince Edward County are not under the sole control of the county," but rather are mandated to exist under the Virginia Constitution, proclaiming the decision "a great victory for the Negro parents and children of Prince Edward County." Ultimately, however, the raised expectations proved all for naught, as Lewis did enter a formal order mandating compliance on October 10, but immediately

[457] Boyte to Fairfax, 2 April 1962, ibid.

stayed it to permit an appeal. All in all, the events of 1962 deeply discouraged the pro-public school camp, which found its hopes raised only to be dashed.[458]

Farmville Supervisor John Steck, the transplanted Pennsylvanian, struck Boyte as "a man whose position is dictated solely by expediency," who wholeheartedly embraced his employer's perspective and served as a willing megaphone for the Foundation, but would probably espouse different principles if employed by someone with "less severe racist tendencies." Dairy farmer Charles Pickett railed against the "evil influence" of agitators and repeatedly avowed that "we can handle the colored people of this county" if dissenters, both local and national, would bow out. His esteem for his native county verged upon pride in insularity, not to mention irony, as he explained with evident sincerity that board members' long residence in Prince Edward provided them a uniquely accurate understanding of the black community. Continually referring to the NAACP as "that NACP organization," he demonstrated very little concern for resolving the situation.[459]

Boyte considered Charles Gates of the Lockett district the most powerful member of the Board. He was an "impeach Earl Warren" man, firmly committed to his own brand of paternalism and to the county's course of action. Utterly devoid of concern for the plight of the black children, he ascribed all responsibility for the closed schools to what he termed "the unreasonable attitude of the Negro community." Fully committed to

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[458] Boyte to Fairfax, 2 April 1962, ibid; Press Release, "Bias Ban Extended in Prince Edward County," 6 April 1962, NAACP Papers, Part III, Series D, Reel 9; Press Release, "NAACP Leaders Hail Virginia School Ruling," 28 July 1962, ibid.

[459] Boyte to Fairfax, 3 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

keeping the schools closed forever rather than reopening on an integrated basis, he inaccurately claimed an improvement in the county economy since 1959. When questioned upon this point, he grew defensive and abrupt. The elderly T.D. Dillon of the Buffalo district provided a more cordial reception, but Boyte found him extremely hard of hearing and "apparently somewhat senile." Dillon's hearing difficulties complicated communication between the two men, perhaps rendering Boyte's appraisal of him as an individual without any strong convictions, but eager to please and willing to take a great deal of Board direction in his role as chairman of the Budget Committee unfair.[460]

The final member of the Board, Leigh Supervisor Hugh Jenkins, was a stereotypical southern fire-eater. Utterly opposed to reopening the schools without guaranteed tuition grants for whites, he struck Boyte as a man who "in general reflects a negative outlook toward life and seems to oppose as a general principle the expenditure of public funds for any purpose whatsoever." Like Gates and Pickett, he denied any sense of responsibility for the closings, blaming the whole situation upon "the attitude of the Negro." Besides the Supervisors, Boyte also sought out Farmville mayor William Watkins, *Herald* publisher J. Barrye Wall, school superintendent T.J. McIlwaine, School Board chairman W. Edward Smith, and Commonwealth Attorney Frank Nat Watkins, a member of the defendants' legal team. He described Watkins as "under the sincere impression that the white people of this section always have been fair and reasonable in their treatment of the Negro." Though Watkins' correspondence with Board of Supervisors' counsel J. Segar Gravatt indicates that the meeting with Boyte did not shake any of the Commonwealth attorney's convictions, it does appear to have broadened his

[460] Boyte to Fairfax, 9 April 1962, ibid.

understanding. He questioned the Quaker to great length as to why the integrationists received significant support from church groups, a matter he seemed to find sincerely perplexing, and admitted at the end that perhaps he had not examined the matter as objectively as he might have. Boyte considered him a man who might have played a different role in the crisis had he not been surrounded all his life by "like" opinions.[461]

Finally, the interviewer turned to the white clergy as the last group of opinion leaders. Rev. James Murphy of Farmville Methodist Church dodged responsibility for the issue by rationalizing that the schools had closed before his call to the county and that his district superintendent had sent him to Farmville to "calm the waters," not stir up trouble. Boyte noted in his account of the meeting that "there was a certain sadness about this interview with Rev. Mr. Murphy inasmuch as he obviously knows better but on the other hand does not feel adequate to tackle this problem in accordance with what he feels his religious position actually demands of him." His successor, Rev. Reginald Vanderberry, blamed the situation upon Lindsay Almond's "defection" from massive resistance. One of the few clergymen to state forthrightly that he would not allow members of the community to tell him how to frame his ministry, he nevertheless nervously anticipated potential fall-out from being seen with Boyte. The combination of fear and a general predilection toward massive resistance ensured that Vanderberry would not be a voice for change.[462]

Rev. Hoge Smith of Farmville Presbyterian justified his failure to speak out on the grounds that when he accepted the pastorate in 1960 (after the departure of the more

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[461] Boyte to Fairfax, 9 April 1962, ibid.

[462] Boyte to Fairfax, 10 April 1962, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 6 July 1962, ibid.

outspoken James Kennedy), he promised to undertake a ministry of conciliation. Rev. Herman Dowdy, who pastored an assortment of independent fundamentalist churches across the county, personally opposed racial integration but admitted that he knew many rural white families who would accept some desegregation in exchange for the reopening of the public schools. However, when asked if he could introduce Boyte to some of these families, he demurred, noting that "he could not engage in politics inasmuch as his life was devoted to religious activity."[463]

Dr. Charles Fishburne, Jr., rector of Johns Memorial Episcopal, was a classic paternalist who interpreted race relations through the lens of his experiences on South Carolina's Edisto Island thirty years previously. Ascribing the demise of the "affectionate" relationship that had characterized black-white interaction to the New Deal, he mused that blacks who joined the Works Progress Administration had not seemed content to return to the old relationships "which had been a source of much pleasure and contentment to them." He frequently employed the word "nigger," which he considered a kindly term. Maintained that the issue confronting the county was a political one, not a moral question, and thus beyond his appropriate sphere, he nevertheless did suggest that any immorality in the equation rested upon the shoulders of those demanding an integrated community. After the Johns Memorial vestry passed a resolution in 1963 barring blacks from any "regular" church services, ushers turned prospective black worshipers away at the door or warned them after services never to return. Avowing that it would "break his heart" if any "real" Episcopalians were turned away through these practices, Fishburne nonetheless cherished his anger toward

[463] Boyte to Fairfax, 14 April 1962, ibid.

interlopers who "pushed themselves in" where they were not wanted. Noting that "I couldn't worship that way," he assumed that African Americans entering a white church could not possess a sincere desire to worship.[464]

Dr. Otis McClung of Farmville Baptist, the largest church in the county, outstripped all other members of the white clergy with his intense hostility. Interestingly enough, observers originally mentioned him to Irene Osborne back in 1960 as possibly possessing some "hidden liberal tendencies" due to his family connections. In the irony of southern racial politics, McClung's brother-in-law, Rev. Heslip ("Happy") Lee, served as Executive Secretary of the Virginia Council on Human Relations. But after hearing a diatribe on "the yellow Negro," Osborne "put him down as hopeless." His opinions changed little over time, and Harry Boyte was shocked to discover in 1962 that out of all the hardcore segregationists with whom he had spoken, this Christian minister possessed the least compassion for the suffering black community.[465]

McClung condemned the Southern Baptist Convention's recent disavowal of racial discrimination as a violation of Scripture. (Not all of his parishioners agreed – he made Annie Putney "sick at her stomach.") When Boyte brought up the financial hardship private school tuition posed for many lower class whites, he remarked with amusement that people had to learn that goals are not achieved without sacrifice and that any price would be worthwhile to prevent racial intermingling in the public schools. He launched a bitter attack on Rev. Griffin, calling the black preacher devoid of integrity and

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[464] Ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

[465] Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 4 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 10 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

morality and threatening to leak information that could get him indicted on a morals charge. Angered at what he termed an increasing black propensity to "push themselves where they are not wanted," McClung considered white rights in serious jeopardy, commenting that if they were not defended, the entire nation would crumble.[466]

Admitting to Nancy Adams that at times he had trouble squaring his personal convictions with the teachings of Jesus Christ, he confessed that, "When I got out of seminary, I thought I had all the answers. But now I don't have any. It's hard to know how one can practically apply these teachings." Nonetheless, his words and actions gave little indication of any serious wrestling with his conscience. Terming integration a violation of sacred heritage, he argued that ministers had no right to advise their congregation on social issues or bring up matters that would divide the community into hostile factions. McClung and his colleagues hid behind the conviction that they could not take a stand on a "social" issue or ally themselves with "one side" in this matter. Yet in allowing the Foundation to use their buildings free of charge, they took a stand. In providing the private school system the facilities without which it could not operate, in being conciliatory, in remaining silent in the face of suffering and injustice, they chose a side. In taking the easy way out, in "preserving" the church from dissention and ensuring its financial survival, they allied an institution called to "obey God rather than man" with the forces of temporal power.[467]

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[466] Boyte to Fairfax, 10 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, ibid.

[467] Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 10 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid. See Acts 5:29, Holy Bible, New International Version.

In Prince Edward, few hard and fast divisions separated those possessing moderate tendencies from those upholding the segregationist narrative. Church affiliation, economic or professional status, and connection to the colleges did not predispose residents to take a certain position on the situation. Moderates and obstructionists worked, worshipped, and resided side by side, and still reached different conclusions on the question of preserving the public school system. Nativity, however, did play a role. While not a rule of absolutes (significant exceptions apply,) migrants from outside the county (or the state) often possessed more reservations regarding the county's course of action, and due to their comparatively shallow roots in the area proved more willing to take controversial stands. This is particularly true for members of the college communities, whose academic lifestyle offered job opportunities outside the county for those interested in leaving. While the majority of faculty members and administrators either supported the Supervisors or kept their personal convictions to themselves, a disproportionately high number did affiliate with the moderates' coalition.

Social class also influenced individuals' willingness to take a public position on the issue. Throughout the summer of 1964, CPE members worked tirelessly to build support for the public schools amongst lower class whites, many of whom lost the opportunity to educate their children with the ascendancy of the Academy. In the early years, however, dissent working class whites, fearful of economic retaliation that could endanger their families' survival and concerned to protect their children's scholarship money, preserved their silence. Those who spoke out tended to be more educated and more financially secure, members of the middle and upper class. Yet unlike members of

the power bloc, their economic and social interests favored growth and expansion of the local economy.

Speaking Out

In an environment of such hostility and repression, it is not difficult to understand why so many whites opposed to the closings chose to keep their opinions to themselves, relocated, or retreated into silence after a brief period of action. Longwood historian Marvin Schlegel, a Bush Leaguer, and his wife left St. John's Memorial Episcopal Church when it offered its building to the Foundation in 1959, and explored the possibility of starting a Prince Edward chapter of the Virginia Committee for Public Schools. Coordinating a group of dissidents in his home to discuss the matter, Schlegel eventually wrote VCPS President J. L. Blair Buck in August 1959 that "it was the consensus of opinion that the time is not yet ripe for the organization of open opposition." He also penned a series of letters to the *Herald* criticizing the closings. Upon the publication of his letters, obstructionists began circulating a petition around town encouraging his dismissal from Longwood. President Lankford defended the professor, but warned him that if further outcry erupted, he would be unable to preserve his job.[468]

Schlegel's wife, an English professor equally opposed to the closings but fearful of retaliation against her husband, significantly impeded his ability to take any further action to provoke the community. Physically handicapped and dependent upon crutches to move about, Marvin Schlegel was more vulnerable than most, and many AFSC staff

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[468] Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Murrell, "The Impossible Prince Edward Case," in Lassiter and Lewis: 134-167.

members noted that her protective attitude "seems likely to prevent him from doing anything much." Nonetheless, Schlegel did serve as president of the Prince Edward Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations and in the fall of 1966 accepted a teaching position at Norfolk State College, a division of the historically black Virginia State College. When asked why, he responded that Norfolk State needed teachers, and that although he would like to see an end to "black" and "white" colleges, for the time being he would focus on improving quality of education at black schools.[469]

Another young academic family, the Russell MacDonalds of Hampden-Sydney, "young turks" who worked with Harry Boyte to enlarge the moderates' coalition, left Prince Edward in the summer of 1962 for a position at Washington and Lee University. MacDonald and his wife had four young sons whom they did not wish to attend the Academy, and he outspokenly attributed his reason for departure to the school situation. In 1959-1960, they tutored their oldest son at home, but with the arrival of another baby, this became impossible and they reluctantly sent the boy to the Foundation Schools as a stop-gap measure until they could leave the county.[470]

John Wilson of WFLO told Bill Bagwell that his feelings toward the power group aside, he could not afford to speak out because doing his job – reporting news and selling advertising space – required him to interact with all groups in the community. Several of

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[469] Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Donzella White and Philip Stockman, "Local Professor Will Teach at Norfolk State Next Year," *The VOICE of Prince Edward County*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (June 1966), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[470] Osborne to Moffett and Fairfax, 5 August 1960, 1960 Box, Folder 38123, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 29 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

his close friends confided later that Wilson desired to be more outspoken, but the station owner, who was not local, insisted that WFLO could not afford to embroil itself in the controversy. Two members of the local aristocracy, Fannie Shorter and her sister Mrs. John H. Payne, held in high esteem due to the elite background and wealth of their family, turned their fairly insulated position to good use. They corresponded with Attorney General and President Kennedy about the situation and encouraged their numerous contacts, neighbors, and employees to support open, integrated schools. Fannie Shorter also wrote a critical letter to the *Farmville Herald*, which refused to publish it.[471]

Dr. Charles McRae, Professor of Religion at Hampden-Sydney, another Bush League participant, found his ability to speak out handicapped by the college's practice of renewing his contract annually. Acknowledging a long-standing tension between himself and college administration, he nonetheless insisted that administrators had engineered the decision to reconsider his contract every year to ensure that he did not become "an agitator over the public schools." Though many of the college-affiliated moderates regularly dealt with strained relations with their administrators and threats to their careers, they also faced an uphill battle in getting anyone to listen to them. Most felt that no matter how long they resided in the county, their affiliation with the colleges made them outsiders in Farmville and their ideas suspect to local residents. Many commented that the power group "considers identification with Hampden-Sydney or Longwood as

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[471] Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 27 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

per se placing one in an ivory tower with a totally impractical approach to the problems of the community."[472]

Though the majority of the student body on both campuses either supported the Board of Supervisors' actions or kept their opinions to themselves, a few did become involved in protest. Hampden-Sydney, which drew the vast majority of its student body from southside Virginia, possessed a reputation as a very conservative school. College president Thomas Gilmer, who resigned from the Prince Edward County School Board in the early 1950's ("when the trouble started") repeatedly insisted that H-SC students could freely participate as they saw fit in county affairs so long as they obeyed the law. Noting that most came from home environments that predisposed them to support the Supervisors, he nonetheless avowed that he had not in the past and would not in the future ever attempt to encourage students to think and/or act in a particular way on any issue. McRae saw the situation differently, maintaining that "the conservatism of the students received constant encouragement from the members of the faculty."[473]

Nonetheless, a few Hampden-Sydney men attended the February 1961 Virginia Student Human Relations Seminar, "Education, States' Rights and Democracy." Jointly sponsored by AFSC and the National Student Association, the seminar met in Farmville and included lunch and discussion with members of the local black community. Under the leadership of young faculty member Keith Dix, a group of eight students, including many of the seminar attendees, began meeting that month to discuss what they could do

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[472] Boyte to Fairfax, 7 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 10 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid.

[473] Boyte to Fairfax, 30 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 7 July 1962, ibid.

about the situation. Helen Baker spent an evening with them in a small bookstore in Hampden-Sydney that she later described as "one of the most enjoyable things that I have done in Farmville." When two girls from Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts called Baker to ask whether they could come to Prince Edward over spring break, the Hampden-Sydney group arranged housing for them. They also persuaded their history and sociology professors to invite the visitors into their classrooms for open discussions about the situation and helped arrange an interracial dinner to allow the girls to meet some of the county's black activists. They sought out Griffin and the Millers to more fully understand the black perspective and lent a hand with organizing the Teenage Club and doing fix-up work at the Recreation Center.[474]

Around the same time, a group of Longwood girls also began to visit Baker. Virginia natives who nevertheless felt that they did not know much about the community in which they were living, they poured out their frustration over the difficulty of finding adults with whom they could openly discuss the situation in the county. President Lankford's determination to maintain smooth relations with the power structure kept debate muffled on campus. When the NAACP obtained permission from the Board of Supervisors to hold a *Brown* anniversary rally on the steps of the county courthouse in May 1961, Lankford forbade Longwood students to attend. Acceding to a request from Farmville mayor William Watkins, he denied students the opportunity to hear the "opposing" point of view as presented by Roy Wilkins and Oliver Hill or to form their

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[474] Richard Ramsay, Memo to Jean Fairfax and Connie Curry, 7 February 1961, 1961 Box 1, Folder 38167, ibid; "Agenda for Virginia Student Human Relations Seminar," 18 February 1961, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 23 February 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38164, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 10 March 1961, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 30 March 1961, ibid.

own informed opinions on the issue under the excuse of preventing a riot. When the college chapter of the YWCA planned a forum on public school education, he pressured its leaders to abandon their plans to invite a black speaker to present the black point of view, but offered no opposition to the invitation to Foundation administrator Roy Pearson.[475]

In April 1963, the Longwood newspaper, *The Rotunda*, polled 730 students, 500 of whom admitted to feeling "some" responsibility for the situation. 300 respondents said they would not tolerate a similar action in their home communities. Students applauded state senator Armistead Boothe of Alexandria, one of the state's few true moderates, when he proposed in a speech on campus that the General Assembly appropriate funds to operate the Prince Edward schools, noting that "it might be illegal, but nobody would sue." The audience broke into open cheers in response to his comment that he would rather "do something illegal to open schools than do something legal to shut them." The following fall, in the wake of the summer demonstrations, editor Donna Humphlett wrote a piece encouraging the student body to petition management at the town's only movie theater to admit black patrons. When instructed by Acting President Fred Wygal (replacing Lankford during a leave of absence) to modify the article before publication, she refused, choosing instead to print a conspicuous blank space in the editorial column. A senior from Petersburg described as a "brilliant student," Humphlett emblazoned a straightforward message upon the blank space:

> The tone of the editorial which was to appear here was considered by the administration to be too antagonistic for publication. The blank space is to

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[475] Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 15 March 1961, ibid; Baker to Fairfax and Hartzler, 19 May 1961, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 3 June 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 2 May 1961, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse.

> remind us that an unsolved social problem exists and will continue to exist until we find a satisfactory solution to it. Such a solution can come about only through the combined efforts of the groups who have created it. May we be willing to put forth that effort."

When questioned about the matter, Wygal fell back upon Lankford's tired excuses, arguing that response to the article might have proved antagonistic and led to violence.[476]

Six months later, Nancy Adams helped another group of Longwood girls envision a constructive role for themselves in the crisis. With her guidance, they decided to sponsor an interracial conference for Virginia college students on "The Role of the Student in the Desegregation Process of Southern Universities." Reaching out to the community, they assembled a planning committee consisting of teachers and teenagers from the Free Schools, Hampden-Sydney boys and other Longwood students. As might be expected, Lankford sought to discourage their efforts, beginning by denigrating the students involved as "irresponsible, untrustworthy, and in need of adult guidance." Hoping to sever the link between the college and the program, he encouraged Adams to take over sponsorship of the conference as an AFSC venture. Upon her refusal, he turned upon the students themselves, questioning their right to "speak for" the college and urging them to give up the idea. While insisting that the program originated with their own idea, they acknowledged Adams' guidance, providing him an opportunity to air his opinion that the students were being used as "pawns for a questionable organization."

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[476] Ben A. Franklin, "Prince Edward, Va. Race Stand Is Questioned by Campus Editor," *New York Times*, 27 October 1963; Virginia Summers, "Boothe Urges Assembly Aid for Prince Edward," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 April 1963.

Despite the fact that his belligerence reduced one organizer to tears, the group, under the leadership of Dana Brewer, pressed forward.[477]

Held in May in the Miller Building basement, the event attracted approximately seventy-five students from Longwood, Hampden-Sydney, Virginia Union University (black), Virginia State College (black), Randolph-Macon College, St. Paul's College (black), University of North Carolina, and North Carolina College. Adult attendees included Moss and another Longwood professor, local black ministers James Samuel Williams and Goodwin Douglas, three Free School teachers, Rev. Arthur Field of Hampden-Sydney College Church, Father Reikowski, the local Catholic priest, and three members of the Virginia Council on Human Relations. The conference kicked off with a speech on community education by William Delano of the Peace Corps. Ten students remained after the session to discuss the Civil Rights Bill with Delano and Executive Secretary of the Virginia Council on Human Relations "Happy" Lee.[478]

The larger group returned the following day for an interactive panel on "How Racial Attitudes Develop." The organizers made a great effort to insure a diverse and thought-provoking assortment of panelists, and attendees heard from a young black man recently sentenced to a year in prison for participation in a sit-in, the Longwood student body president, a black student at a formerly all-white university who was active in student government, a Moton High School (Free School Association) student and

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[477] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 24 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, ibid.

[478] Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, ibid.

placement program veteran, and a pre-ministerial candidate at Hampden-Sydney who considered himself "intellectually but not emotionally" committed to integration.[479]

Lankford ordered Dana Brewer to report to his office at 7:30 AM on Saturday. Accompanied by Adams and Happy Lee, she complied, and he allowed events to proceed. The students' decision to invite their guests to tour the campus in the afternoon, however, upset him greatly, and he scolded her in a post-conference session for bringing African Americans onto the campus. When a group of Longwood girls and a Hampden-Sydney boy planned a follow up trip to visit one of the black participants at North Carolina College in Durham, Lankford and the Dean of Women intervened. Ostensibly under the guise of obtaining permission for them to leave campus (though university policy did not require parental permission for day trips), they called the girls' parents predicting that harm would befall them their daughters if they undertook such a trip.[480]

To Adams's delight, local student action spiked in the wake of the conference. When the new Virginia College Council on Human Relations (organized by the ubiquitous Ed Peeples, by 1964 a faculty member at the Medical College of Virginia) announced its inaugural meeting in Richmond, four carloads of Prince Edward students attended. Upon returning to Farmville, about thirty young people met at the AFSC office to form a local interracial students' group, which they dubbed the Farmville Students Social and Service Club (FSSS). Electing Skippy Griffin (Rev. Griffin's oldest son, currently finishing his sophomore year at the Free Schools) and Hampden-Sydney's Dave Releyea co-chairs, the group drew up a list of activities for the fall. Proposed projects

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[479] Adams to Dorothy Bucklin and Elizabeth J. Miller, 29 June 1964, ibid.

[480] Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, ibid.

including cleaning up and planting the courthouse lawn, boycotting the movie theater, erecting a fence around First Baptist, sponsoring speakers, and furthering the work of the Virginia College Council on Human Relations. Upon their return in the fall, FSSS members chose to focus upon cataloguing books for Griffin and manning a Lyndon Johnson-Hubert Humphreys booth in the shopping center parking lot. With the reopening of the public schools, members turned their attention toward establishing a tutorial program. The Hampden-Sydney boys, many of whom tutored the previous year for the Free School Association, decided to run an independent program of Saturday sessions geared toward advanced students, offering assistance with physics, higher mathematics, and foreign languages.[481]

Adams continued to "stir the waters" at Longwood and her contacts grew dramatically. Speaking invitations poured in, and in the fall of 1964, she spoke to two sororities and the college YWCA about racial reconciliation, civil rights, and integration. The YWCA chapter, traditionally a conservative group, advertised and chartered a bus to Richmond to attend an address by John Howard Griffin, the author of *Black Like Me*.[482] Forty-two students took advantage of the offer. A few weeks later, the YWCA Cabinet invited her back to campus to address the student body. About seventy-five girls attended, and as Adams noted, "It was a nervy project for this particular group to undertake campus-wide sponsorship and publicity of my speaking, as I understand from

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[481] Ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, ibid; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 3.

[482] A white Texan who chemically altered his skin color and assumed the identity of an itinerant black man to travel through the South in 1959, John Howard Griffin wrote *Black Like Me* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961) as an account of his experiences on the other side of the color line. Whites in his hometown burned him in effigy, and he eventually moved his family to Mexico to escape threats on his life.

my spies that there was quite a bit of administrative opposition to my speaking on campus." When Donna Humphlett's successor at *The Rotunda*, Pat Wallace, one of Adams's closest contacts, published a three part series on the school situation that Lankford found offensive, he questioned the editor at length as to who instigated what he considered such an "inflammatory" piece. No doubt he suspected the beautiful young Quaker agitator.[483]

College administration greeted the rise in student activity with hostility. When word reached Lankford that the president of the FSSS, a Longwood student, planned to allow Moton students to drive with her to the John Howard Griffin lecture, he threatened her with expulsion. FSSS, however, continued to meet weekly. The majority of the thirty members of the group came from Moton High and Longwood, although some Hampden-Sydney students also participated. Numbers increased in October 1964, when the Newman Club, an association for Catholic students at both colleges, called Adams to state that its entire membership of twenty students desired to join. Throughout the fall of 1964, FSSS hosted a picnic-exchange with an interracial young people's group from Charlottesville and threw itself into the voter registration efforts sweeping the black community prior to the November presidential election. Breaking into interracial teams, the young people canvassed the community with "surprisingly good results."[484]

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[483] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 8 October 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 October 1964, ibid.

[484] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 8 October 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 October 1964, ibid.

In describing white barber Allie Harper, Harry Boyte once noted that, "One would guess that he would be perhaps the most unlikely businessman in Farmville to have moderate views concerning the public school system. This is simply confirmation of the fact that it is a very serious error to anticipate reactions of various individuals in a situation such as that which exists here."[485] From 1960 to 1965, AFSC staff members strove to set aside their own assumptions and anticipations, to reach out to moderates and segregationists alike as individuals, and to leave no stone unturned in the search for those willing to speak out against the county's course of action. Bleak as the situation was in Prince Edward, without the American Friends Service Committee, it would have been still bleaker. Through their presence, determination, and community relations expertise, Jean Fairfax, Irene Osborne, Helen Baker, Harry Boyte, Bill Bagwell, and Nancy Adams emboldened and enlarged the moderate community. Their expertise and commitment built Citizens for Public Education and guided the Farmville Students Social and Service Club, while their personal lifestyles and intellectual/social commitments opened the door to a liberal outlook on the world rarely imagined in Southside Virginia.

They provided alternative role models for dissenting students at Longwood and Hampden-Sydney, support and companionship for ostracized whites, and intellectual stimulation for "stranded" intellectuals at the colleges. Through exhausting and repetitious visitation rounds, they unearthed new members for the moderates' coalition and made contact with virtually every white constituency in the county, from parents too poverty-stricken to pay their bank notes to the Foundation to members of the Board of Supervisors. In strengthening the biracial committee, prodding the Field group, and

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[485] Boyte to Fairfax, 27 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid.

nursing along Citizens for Public Education, they opened channels of communication among local moderates and helped provide venues for local action. Throughout the crisis, Prince Edward whites ceaselessly reiterated their desire to "solve our own problems." Though they ultimately proved unable to do so, the work of AFSC staff members spurred on much of the scanty progress made toward this goal.

CHAPTER 6

THE LONG HOT SUMMER: 1963

On July 9, 1963, a reporter for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* wrote about two attempted sit-ins in Farmville, the first at the College Shoppe, a Main Street restaurant, and the second at the State Theater, the town's only movie house. His surprise shone through his prose as he deemed the event "the first reported Negro movement in this Southside Virginia locality, which has gained prominence in recent years as the focal point of a struggle over the closings of Prince Edward County's schools." This writer defined movements as synonymous with street protest. Despite the school strike, NAACP suit, PECCA, the training centers, the Leadership Institute, and the rallies with Roy Wilkins and Martin Luther King, Jr., he never considered Prince Edward County the site of a movement – until thirty-five young people sat down for freedom.[486]

Despite the reporter's simplistic definition of a movement, he did correctly identify the presence of a new pattern of resistance in Prince Edward. Like so much of the nation, the summer of 1963 brought racial turmoil to Farmville. Teenagers staged daily street demonstrations and the NAACP sponsored a boycott of county merchants. Local law enforcement officials arrested nearly fifty people, and by the end of the summer, a visiting educational researcher noted that casual conversation between blacks and whites on the streets of Farmville had all but disappeared. Teenagers enacted their

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[486] "Two Sit-Ins Attempted in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 9 July 1963, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 232.

frustrations with what they considered the older generation's "inability to move," and the divisions in black unity came sharply into focus.[487]

Summer Crash Programs

If demonstrations defined summer 1963, emergency educational projects characterized summer 1962. Deeply moved by the situation, teachers and college/graduate students around the nation recognized an opportunity to use their education/professional expertise to further the campaign against desegregation and provide relief to children popularly depicted as civil rights martyrs. Many courageously and selflessly gave of themselves to provide some hope to the victims of massive resistance. The short-term, externally planned nature of their programs, however – along with the introduction of new individuals into the county – often resulted in rivalries, strained relationships with locals (both white and black), and insufficient follow-through or coordination between programs.

The Virginia Teachers Association returned to Prince Edward for a repeat of the 1961 crash program. A group of college and graduate students under the umbrella of the Student Christian Federation of New England offered a simultaneous seven week Summer College Educational Project (SCEP). Several observers, including Rev. Griffin, found themselves disturbed by many VTA members' apparent hostility toward the New England students, convinced that the discord negatively impacted the quality of instruction offered by the teachers' program. Several members confided to Griffin that VTA Executive Secretary J. Rupert Picott had requested them not to become too closely

[487] Green et al, p. 121.

identified with SCEP personnel, whom he considered "somewhat infiltrated by communist doctrine."[488]

SCEP leader Bill Bennett, a Harvard Divinity School student, took exception to the hostility, as well as the local police's practice of following members of his group as they traveled around the county to the three instruction centers set up in the former training centers at High Rock Baptist Church, St. James A.M.E. Church, and the abandoned Triumph Church. Harry Boyte applauded the quality of instruction accorded the approximately 150 students who attended the three SCEP centers, noting that the group "reflects considerable enthusiasm and dedication to their work." With the exception of Farmville native and placement program veteran Phyllistine Ward, a student at North Carolina's Bennett College, all of the SCEP volunteers hailed from New England institutions. Bill Bennett's wife, Jean, and Ruth Turner represented the Harvard Graduate School of Education A.M.T program, and Fred Wallace, Harvard Law. The Yale contingent included senior history major Dave Rudenstine, Yale Law student Dick Zorn, second year divinity student Tony Sherman, and his wife, Bonnie, a music teacher in the New Haven Public Schools. Sandy Bjerre, a graduate student in English at Wesleyan, Wellesley senior Nancy Stoller, a philosophy major, and Amherst College's Tim Parsons, a political science major, rounded out the group. Ward, Wallace and Turner were African American; the others Caucasian.[489]

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[488] Harry Boyte to Jean Fairfax, 31 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection. AFSC Archives.

[489] Ibid; Ruth Turner, "Educational Report – SCM SCEP 1962," 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38333, ibid.

Slightly more than half of the participants in the SCEP program had never attended school. Nearly that many could not read or write. The Bennetts, Phyllistine Ward, and one local teenage volunteer staffed Triumph Center. where they provided eighteen pupils an individualized program. Teaching supplies were scanty – two long tables, four desks, and two movable blackboards – but flexibility and innovation were plentiful. The four teachers divided the pupils into five groups – younger pre-primers, older pre-primers, first grade readers, second grade readers, and older students – and rotated through them. Bill Bennett taught math, Jean Bennett and Phyllistine Ward concentrated on reading, and the teenage aide assisted with numbers and letters drills, storytelling, and singing.[490]

Fred Wallace, local teenager James Ghee, and Tony & Bonnie Sherman supervised fifty children at St. James Center. In an effort to minimize embarrassment and provide encouragement rather than despair, teachers grouped students, who ranged from age five to eighteen, by both age and ability. Bonnie Sherman worked with the youngest group, focusing on simple addition, number recognition up to twenty, differentiating colors, and completing one pre-primer reader. Tony Sherman, Ghee and Wallace divided up the older students, Sherman taking those who ranged from first - third grade in performance level, Ghee taking a small group near fourth grade level, and Wallace the most advanced students. Tony Sherman's class devoted itself to spelling, speech and grammar, telling time, and improving reading skills. Wallace also concentrated on

[490] Ruth Turner, "Educational Report – SCM SCEP 1962," 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38333, ibid.

spelling and grammar, but added fractions, early U.S. history, and a concentrated study of the geography of the American South to his curriculum.[491]

At High Rock Center, volunteers oversaw six age/ability groups, which met in the church basement and sanctuary, and on nice days, on the lawn outside. The youngest non-readers (six and seven year olds) worked with Ruth Turner, who attempted to follow a typical first-grade curriculum, including story time, singing, sharing time, a science/health discussion period, number and letter drills, workbook exercises, arts and crafts, and practicing printing. Nancy Stoller's eight to ten year old non-readers moved more quickly. Laying a foundation of phonetics and flashcards, she took them through a series of Houghton Mifflin primers (one child finished three by the end of the seven week period), covered basic arithmetic, and opened up the world of science through hands-on exploration of objects on a "science table."[492]

Sandy Bjerre's six to eleven year olds made some substantial gains. Coming in, all knew the alphabet, read a few words and possessed some familiarity with proper classroom behavior (following directions, interacting politely with other children, etc.), indicating previous experience in a classroom. Focusing her energies on increasing reading comprehension, Bjerre led her group through phonetic exercises and flashcard drills. Students played word games, participated in group oral reading sessions, and learned to combine words into simple stories of their own. By the end of the program, all of her beginning readers, who had recognized only a few words seven weeks earlier, read at a first grade level. Five who had entered at a first grade level left in the second grade

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[491] Ibid.

[492] Ibid.

primer. Dave Rudenstine's eleven to fourteen year olds, all of whom read at a first or second grade level, possessed more serious academic handicaps. Fearing that writing exercises would discourage them, he concentrated on language arts: introducing new vocabulary words and practicing them with flashcard drill, oral presentations, and reading.[493]

Tim Parsons' class encompassed those working on a second to fourth grade level. His diverse curriculum included handwriting, phonetics, oral and silent reading, vocabulary drill, and public speaking. Students wrote science compositions, performed hands-on experiments with plants, and explored social studies concepts such as people groups, rules and laws, and geography, with the assistance of magazine pictures and maps. Under his direction, the class practiced addition and subtraction, and some of the more advanced students moved on to multiplication, division, and word problems. Dick Zorn's group, which included students ranging from fourth grade to high school level, plunged into the world of literature. Besides the textbook, *Adventures in American Literature*, and Scholastic Magazine, he introduced the more advanced readers to Robert Frost and John Steinbeck. While the majority of the group worked on arithmetic, two students concentrated on fractions, and one received tutoring in algebra and geometry. American History and science lessons moved the curriculum beyond reading and writing and attempted to provide some instruction in the other core subjects that parents rarely had the capacity to teach at home.[494]

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[493] Ibid.

[494] Ibid.

The teachers quickly noted that the majority of the children seemed more proficient in mathematics than in language arts, theorizing that the concreteness of arithmetic made it easier for parents to teach at home, and that its daily use in rural life rendered it a skill more likely to be absorbed through chores, work, and play. They also observed that many of the students seemed to enjoy the concreteness of math – the fact that answers are either right or wrong and that progress can be easily measured. Yet as in reading, a significant number of children lacked a firm foundation for their knowledge. Familiar with the mechanics but not the concepts underlying them, they could solve problems without understanding why or how they arrived at the correct answer. In language arts, some children recognized words but failed to understand the concept of a "sentence," a "word," or a "letter." As few had received their instruction from trained teachers, they were unfamiliar with phonetics – able to recite the alphabet, but without grasping the relationship of a letter's sound to its shape.[495]

Their advanced age often allowed them to move more quickly through material, but presented serious challenges of its own. As to be expected, many children were ashamed of their lack of knowledge, quickly embarrassed, easily discouraged, and unusually fearful of exposing themselves to potential ridicule through making mistakes. Without years of exposure to classroom protocol, many of the younger children lacked the attention span and powers of concentration generally expected of their age group. Older children grew quickly bored with introductory reading material of the "Dick and Jane" variety, embarrassed to be seen struggling with what they deemed "baby stuff." All in all, however, teachers noted that "overeagerness was a greater problem than

[495] Ibid.

indifference," and that the majority of children possessed a real excitement to learn. Some rarely took their recess break, preferring instead to seek out extra tutoring, and many asked for additional homework assignments.[496]

Outside of the classroom, the volunteers struggled to find their place in the community. Bill Bennett told Harry Boyte that the group had little contact with the white community, aside from one or two rather cool encounters with Mayor Watkins. Boyte, however, noted that:

> I accept without hesitation the high interest and competence of the group in working with the some 150 students who are attending the crash program. There is considerable division, however, within the group itself of what members consider the 'practical wisdom' of making certain 'compromises' in order to maintain a pleasant relationship with the white society of Farmville.

Suspecting that Tony Sherman, a Southside Virginia native and Hampden-Sydney alumnus, exerted a conservative influence, he criticized Bennett for not displaying "the firm commitment one would hope for," and for accepting Sherman as an unquestioned expert on the racial problems of the Southside. He described Turner, Wallace, Parsons, and Stoller as strongly opposed to making any compromises for the purpose of appeasing the white community, but often outvoted by the rest of the group.[497]

A new group of educational volunteers descended upon the county in 1963. A group of thirty devoted individuals from Queens College and the New York City branch of the United Federation of Teachers set up six centers around the county for their crash program, which focused upon reading. Described by hostile observers as "bearded, beatnik types who fraternized with Negroes on Main Street," they, like their

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[496] Ibid.

[497] Harry Boyte to Jean Fairfax, 31 July 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Boyte to Fairfax, 3 August 1962, ibid.

predecessors, met significant resentment from many members of the white community. Entering Farmville during one of the tensest periods of the entire crisis, they probably encountered even more hostility than the VTA and Student Christian Federation volunteers who preceded them.[498]

Direct Action Comes To Farmville: Protests, Pickets, and Arrests

Concentrated demonstrations began in late July 1963, under the umbrella of the NAACP Youth Council. Dormant for years, the Council reorganized the previous spring through the efforts of Rev. James Samuel Williams of Levi Baptist Church. Williams, a veteran of the 1951 Moton strike, returned to the county from several years at Shaw University, where he served as chairman of the ministerial students' sit-in/demonstration committee, ready to act. Appointed chairman of the Voters Registration League of Prince Edward County in 1962, he found himself deeply impressed by the determination of the rural people. Approaching Griffin with the idea of bringing demonstrations to Farmville, he found his senior colleague thinking along similar lines. Reactivating the Youth Council to serve as the organizational body for the campaign, Griffin asked Williams and Bethel AME pastor Rev. Goodwin Douglas to take charge.[499]

As word spread amongst the young people, it enthused many of those boarding outside the county. Several placement students wrote or called home to find out more information, to ask their parents for permission to participate, or to volunteer their services for the summer. One wrote her mother from New Bedford, Massachusetts that

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[498] Ruth Turner to Jean Fairfax, 2 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, ibid; Sullivan, p. 9-10.

[499] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 231-232.

"it is for us and we should help fight for it." Interestingly enough, when mass protest broke out in late July, three of the four youth leaders - Leslie Francis ("Skippy") Griffin, Jr., Carlton Terry, Ernestine Land, and Grace Poindexter – possessed significant ties to the AFSC. Skippy Griffin and Carlton Terry participated in the placement program. Ernestine Land attended an AFSC sponsored citizenship camp and a seminar on nonviolence in Washington, D.C., after which she paid a visit to Harry Byrd's office to express her disapproval of the situation in Prince Edward County.[500]

The first two attempts to gain access to segregated spaces within the community – the State Theater, the College Shoppe, and lunch counters at J.J. Newberry's, Southside Sundry, and the Owen-Sanford Drug Store – involved students from Hampton Institute and Virginia Union University in the county that spring to conduct a survey of educational needs. Both failed to gain access to the facilities. Near the end of July, a team of SNCC workers consisting of veteran staffers Ivanhoe Donaldson, Roland Sherrod, and Gladys Giles arrived in the county to train participants for sustained direct action, namely, "how you conduct yourself and how you don't get involved in irrelevant activities and how you focus your energies and so forth." On July 25, sixty youth took to the streets of Farmville. Carrying signs calling for open public schools and equal employment opportunities, they paraded up and down Main Street for an hour and a half and staged a sit in in front of Lester Andrews' and Maurice Large's shopping center. Their message - requesting black customers not to buy where they couldn't work and holding business owners responsible for the stalemate in the county – horrified many

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[500] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 17; Helen Baker to Placed Students, 29 January 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38172, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Number 40, interview with Ruth Turner, Summer 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, ibid.

white passersby. Before breaking for the day, they gathered in a large circle outside Griffin's First Baptist Church to chant "Old Jim Crow has got to go."[501]

Things heated up even more the following day, which focused on challenging segregation in common spaces of commerce and entertainment. Fifty youth again marched with pickets for an hour and a half, while twenty-six others attempted sit-ins, stand-ins, and try-ins (trying on merchandise) at five downtown stores, three restaurants, and the State Theater. Theater employees refused to sell tickets to the group, and the J.J. Newberry's waitress told those attempting to desegregate the lunch counter that they could only place orders for take-out. When the activists left, employees removed the lunch counter seats. The groups targeting the College Shoppe and Chappell's Fountain encountered lockouts, and proprietors asked those at Rhue's Diner and Southside Sundry to leave. The only two successes came at the two department stores – Baldwin's and Leggett's – where clerks allowed protesters to try on clothing.[502]

As the demonstrations intensified, an increasing mood of militance swept across the teenage black population. Many acknowledged feelings of anger and resentment toward the older generation, criticizing their elders for not doing enough to challenge the white power structure. Many joined their friends on the picket line, or if unable to

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[501] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 232; Ruth Turner to Fairfax, 2 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Jean Fairfax interview, transcript, p. 17; Henry McLaughlin, "60 Negro Youths March in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 July 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; Henry McLaughlin, "Negro Students Begin Prince Edward Survey," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 17 April 1963, ibid; "Two Sit-ins Are Attempted in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 July 1963, ibid.

[502] Turner to Fairfax, 2 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "50 Negroes Try Farmville Sit-Ins," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 July 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

participate, supported the actions in spirit. Some angrily confronted their parents, receiving in response permission to participate and an acknowledgement that they themselves should have done more. At an open meeting at Beulah AME Church after the first day of action, at least six Youth Council members justified defying parental authority in order to walk the picket lines. Some teenagers, although not the majority, answered the appeal, volunteering for a shift despite their guardians' disapproval.[503]

The weekend brought thirty-three arrests. A mass parade of some 125 people marched through the shopping district Saturday morning, silent and evenly spaced to allow shoppers to enter and exit stores. Police arrested ten picketers gathering in front of the College Shoppe to attempt a sit-in before they had an opportunity to begin and charged them with loitering and blocking the sidewalk. The five participants over the age of eighteen - Angela Neverson (18), Kitty Johnson (18), Grace Poindexter (18), Rev. Richard Hale of St. James AME Church, and Melvin More of the MSU research team - were later convicted. All received twenty-five dollar fines and thirty day jail sentences, suspended for the three girls on condition of good behavior for one year. Lawyers appealed all the convictions. After the arrests, the sheriff's office closed the streets of Farmville for two hours.[504]

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[503] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 17; "50 Negroes Try Farmville Sit-Ins," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 26 July 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU. Tension and collusion between teenage activists and their parents also characterized the direct action campaigns in McComb and Greenwood, Mississippi. See John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 110-133, and Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 174-175.

Though such scenes were commonplace across the South that summer, in a comparatively isolated, conservative area such as Prince Edward they substantially raised blood pressure in the white community. Bubbling tensions came to a head Sunday when demonstrators confronted what Martin Luther King, Jr. once called "the most segregated hour in America." Teams fanned out to four white churches: Johns Memorial Episcopal, Farmville Methodist, Farmville Baptist, and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Though organizers did not publicize the plans for organized "pray-ins," many whites anticipated the arrival of the demonstrators. Some approved, including those who called Griffin the night before to let him know that Johns Memorial's service would begin at 10:00 AM. The majority did not, including, predictably, Rat Glenn, who engineered an early start for the service at Farmville Methodist. Ushers turned demonstrators away upon arrival on the grounds that admittance of the group would create a disturbance. The seven teenagers and one adult who targeted Johns Memorial gained admission, at which point Dean Moss welcomed them into his pew, providing the majority of the congregation yet another reason to despise him. In the weeks following, the Johns Memorial vestry passed a resolution barring blacks from any "regular" church services. The Bishop protested, traveling to Farmville to encourage members to reconsider this policy, but the vestry stood firm. When the group assigned to the Wesleyan Methodist church entered the building, thirty of the thirty-five congregants walked out. The young minister, deeply

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[504] Turner to Fairfax, 2 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "Student Sentenced, Fined in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 August 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

shaken, pled with the group to leave, explaining that it was his first week on the job and he superiors would certainly fire him if they stayed. The protestors obliged.[505]

At a few minutes before 11:00 A.M., the unsuccessful groups joined those assigned to Farmville Baptist on the steps in front of the church. AFSC short-term staff member Ruth Turner, herself African American, approached one of the ushers blocking the doors to inquire about the service time. The usher responded by nodding down the street toward First Baptist and making a statement along the lines of, "You people are not coming in here. You have your own church." Gesturing toward the twenty-two people behind her, Turner queried, "Do you mean we are not going to be admitted to this church?" Upon receiving no answer, she stated, "Then we will wait until the service is over." The group stood quietly as the service began and ushers shepherded latecomer whites around to the side door. Turner and Rev. Williams deliberated for a time over the question of whether the group should sing. Deciding in the affirmative, they sang "We Shall Overcome," "Let Us Break Bread Together," "Lead Me, Guide Me," and "This May Be The Last Time." Rev. Williams also led the group in prayer.[506]

At this point, one of the ushers emerged to threaten the protesters with arrest. No one budged. A few minutes later, the Board of Deacons filed a warrant and police led Williams away (he refused to use the "go limp" method, considering walking a more dignified means to make an exit.) Remaining members launched into a medley of freedom songs, at which time the police returned to carry each away on a stretcher. Officers transported all but two to a room in the county courthouse and charged them

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[505] Turner to Fairfax, 2 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Nancy Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

[506] Ibid.

with disturbing public worship. They led those eighteen and older out singly, told of their bond ($1000 property and $500 cash for the women and $2000 property and $1000 cash for the men), and placed them in a jail cell. The juveniles they released into the custody of their parents.[507]

The adults – Williams, SNCC's Ivanhoe Donaldson, Turner, her sister Patricia, and Bessie Reed and Frances Hayes (AFSC placement program veterans) – experienced relatively decent treatment at the jail. Their cells had no mattresses, but they received food and upon request, ice water. Griffin, Robert Green and Jennie Land of the MSU project dropped by, as did the prisoners' erstwhile lawyers, S.W. Tucker and Henry Marsh. Tucker and Marsh, who took over for Spottswood Robinson and Oliver Hill when their colleagues left for Washington, D.C., were accompanied by Harvard law student Fred Wallace, a 1962 SCEP volunteer clerking in their office that summer. As the lawyers left, commotion ensued when Wallace became separated from Tucker and Marsh, and in his efforts to find them ran into difficulty with some of the sheriff's men. He was arrested and charged with assault and battery.[508]

The Prince Edward County Jail was full to bursting, but Circuit Court Judge Joel Flood kept a step ahead of the demonstrators. He issued an order making the jails of eight nearby counties, three towns and the Virginia state farm a temporary part of the Prince Edward correctional system. At his order, deputies transported the women and men separately to the Lunenburg County Jail, telling neither group their destination. All four of the women again went limp and had to be carried to the car by the deputy sheriffs,

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[507] Ibid.

[508] Ibid.

some of whom Turner noted bore no other identification than handmade POLICE badges. They continued to sing throughout the entire ride and upon arrival were dragged from the car to the anteroom and then dumped in a cell barred by a heavy iron door. From Sunday evening until late Tuesday night, the women played cards, read, talked, and sang. Most had food with them and consequently refused to eat the fare provided by their captors. As Turner noted, "partly because we did not want to cooperate with them in this way, partly because the food was so horrible." Some of the Lunenburg officers found their signing amusing; others did not. Members of the group adapted the song "We Shall Not Be Moved" to indict the governor, mayor, sheriff, and deputy sheriff. Deputy Sheriff Ryder enjoyed the verse than ran, "Deputy Sheriff Ryder, he shall be removed, just like a pile of garbage in the alley," so much that he requested it several times. The sheriff, however, threatened to remove the group's mattresses if the singing did not cease. When it continued, he confiscated Williams and Donaldson's mattresses, but left the women's alone.[509]

Many of the adult leaders felt that the Sunday episode had "pushed too far," that the arrests were ill-timed - they removed twenty-three demonstrators from the picket lines – and that the charges themselves were unfortunate. A few days after her release, Turner herself reflected that, "We would possibly have been arrested under a number of circumstances on Sunday morning; it was probably an unwise choice to have created the situation which was the precipitating one." At the time, Jean Fairfax agreed, writing Turner that:

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[509] Ibid; Henry McLaughlin, "85 Negroes March Silently in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 July 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

> When we agitate and press against discrimination in schools, jobs, public places, etc., there is the assumption that we really want to get in and to use the facilities. You and I know this is not really the case so far as the church is concerned; many Negroes will not go to predominantly white churches even when there is no discrimination...So I have found myself asking why did the students really want to go to the churches? Was it just a symbol or gesture? Were they really trying to get to the heart of the spiritual problem of separation? If so, had the attempted first to get to the heart of the spiritual problem of separation?

As the years passed, Fairfax reevaluated her own position, commenting in 2005 that:

> I felt that the sit-in at the churches probably diverted attention from what the real issues were...I don't agree with that now. I think you take on whatever institutions are part of the problem and the churches were part of the problem. And I'm very glad that the students did that, although at the time, I had some questions about it.[510]

The white churches' complicity with the Foundation and utter abdication of their responsibility to frame the school situation as a moral issue placed them at the heart of the county's system of white dominance. Protesters could hardly take direct action against the power structure without challenging the churches' practices. Yet in a conservative community with church attendance rates as high as Prince Edward's, a "disturbing the worship of God" charge undoubtedly alienated some who might have respected a silent vigil. In hindsight, a push for admittance to each church blended with a silent protest outside those refusing entrance might have proven a better strategy.

The county court handed down its verdict against the protesters in September. All six received $100 fines. Donaldson and the Baptist minister received twelve months in jail (with six suspended for good behavior for three years) for violating one of Virginia's oldest statutes, the ban on "interrupting and disturbing an assembly met for the worship of God." Bessie Reed, Patricia Turner and Frances Hayes received terms of six months

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[510] Fairfax to Turner, 9 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 19.

with the entire term suspended, and Ruth Turner's six month sentence included five suspended. All of the defendants appealed. Tucker ingeniously circumvented the civil rights question through a complicated contention that the state statute under which the demonstrators had been convicted violated both the due process clause and the establishment of religion clause. He argued that in order to find the defendants guilty, prosecutors would have to spell out the definition of "an assembly met for the worship of God," thus making a determination as an agent of the state as to the existence and nature of God, a clear violation of the First Amendment. The cases came before the Prince Edward County Circuit Court on November 19, the same day as Fred Wallace's appeal. Wallace, originally charged with a felony count for allegedly cursing, kicking, and striking Deputies P.F. Gay and J.W. Overton, was convicted by the lower court on three misdemeanor charges instead and sentenced to a $400 dollar fine and six months in jail.[511]

Though some adults did not endorse the arrests at Farmville Baptist, their disapproval did not hobble the movement. A mass meeting at First Baptist Church the evening of the pray-in drew between 400 and 500 people. Picketing and try-ins continued throughout Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. On Wednesday, July 31, activists attempted to sit-in at Chappell's and the College Shoppe, but met a roped-off counter and a slammed door. When town officials denied demonstrators' request for a parade permit on August 3, the young people defiantly proceeded as scheduled. Police

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[511] "Trial Dates Set for Demonstrators," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 September 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; "Student Sentenced, Fined in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 August 1963; "Prince Edward Court to Hear Racial Appeals," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 November 1963, ibid.

immediately arrested twelve picketers for parading without a permit. The court convicted Rev. Goodwin Douglass of Beulah AME Church and twenty-two year old Wilber Eanes, and sentenced Douglass to ten days in jail. The juvenile court judge released the ten juveniles into the custody of their parents under $1000 bonds, on the condition that they attend school in the fall, observe a 10:00 pm curfew and practice good behavior. As August wore on, more young demonstrators continued to join the ranks to replace those sidelined. Picketers distributed flyers reading:

MAKE YOUR $$$$$ WORK FOR FREEDOM

Our Negro Children of Prince Edward County have been segregated...discriminated against...locked out of schools...denied the right to worship God...and jailed. The above acts have been condoned if not supported directly by the merchants of Farmville.

NEGROES CAN STOP THIS!!

Buy where you and your children will be treated with dignity and respect!

MAKE FARMVILLE A GHOST TOWN!!!

Farmville must be as empty as a desert every day until we have public schools for all children in Prince Edward County. Negroes of Amelia, Nottoway, Charlotte, Appomattox, Buckingham, Cumberland, and Lunenburg Counties support the BOYCOTT against the Prince Edward merchants.

DON'T BUY IN FARMVILLE!! BOYCOTT FOR FREEDOM!!

Sponsored by the Prince Edward Branch NAACP[512]

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[512] "Judge Warns 10 Juveniles," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 16 August 1963, ibid; "Student Sentenced, Fined in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, ibid; Reproduced in Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 248.

Lunch counter sit-in attempts failed across town on August 12, although participants won the right to stand and eat at one place. When Free School superintendent Neil Sullivan arrived in town on August 26th, the picket lines were all teenage in composition, well-organized and orderly, with new shifts marching at designated times from First Baptist to relieve those ready for a break. He noted the picketers' "general cleanliness, their poor clothing, and their determined and confident expressions," and jotted down an impression that the majority of their hand-lettered signs bore messages related to education, such as: *Free Public Education is our inalienable right...Four years on the street is four years too long...Why take it out on innocent Negro children?...Integration is the law of the land, but not in Prince Edward County...We aren't dropouts. We are lockouts...*[513]

Prince Edward's Black Teenagers From the Inside Out

At the end of spring 1963, the AFSC, which at the time did not have a resident staff person in county, engaged Ruth Turner to come to Prince Edward to direct a small summer program. National Office staff originally directed Turner, the SCEP volunteer who so impressed Harry Boyte the year before, to "interpret the long-term projects being planned (i.e. the remedial program) to the community and interpret the community situation to the government and interested private groups." However, the intersection of her stay in Prince Edward with the demonstrations ensured that once in the county, her

[513] "Sit-Ins Fail in Farmville," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 12 August 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; Sullivan, p. 7-8.

project took on highly focused aims. She undertook to support the demonstrators with her presence and participation and to interview members of the increasingly visible fourteen to twenty-one year old population about their feelings regarding Prince Edward County, the term "black," America, the demonstrations, nonviolence, education, and whites.[514] Aware that her interviews would serve as the basis for AFSC proposals on how best to entice the older youths to return to school, she probed particularly deeply on questions regarding how her subjects spent their time since 1959, and whether they planned to continue their education when the schools reopened. Thirteen of her fifty-five interviewees personally experienced AFSC programs. One completed four years of high school, seven three years, sixteen two years, six one year, and twenty-five less than one year or none at all.[515]

In hindsight, Turner's topically broad questions and respondents' generally thoughtful answers provide a wealth of sociological data about rural southern black youth in a time of great transition. Her interviews echo the American Council on Education studies of the 1930's, documenting both the continuity and changes in young people's attitudes during the intervening years. Between 1935 and 1940, the American Council on Education, flush with New Deal concern over the long-term welfare of the nation's

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[514] In citing these interviews, I will provide names for those individuals over the age of eighteen at the time of the interview and withhold those of interviewees under the age of majority. Carlton Terry constitutes the only exception to this rule. Although only fourteen at the time of his conversation with Turner, he also spoke extensively with reporters that summer.

[515] Fairfax to Bagwell, 18 June 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38544, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Ruth Turner, Interviews with Youth, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, ibid.

youth, commissioned several studies on personality development and minority group identification among black adolescents. The two most influential, Fisk University sociologist Charles S. Johnson's *Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South* and Howard sociology chair E. Franklin Frazier's *Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States*, provide an eye-opening, often surprising glimpse into the internal lives of young people struggling to define their own place in a society quick to assign them a standard role based on race and class. In probing these teenagers' racial attitudes, values, reactions to skin color differences among blacks, and attitudes toward education, religion, sex, marriage, the future, and southern life, Johnson and Frazier bring to light the personal hopes, fears, and convictions of individuals generally portrayed as a faceless mass.[516]

Turner's interviews do the same. In compiling and comparing the attitudes of fifty-five black Virginia teenagers at a particular moment in their development, she forces observers and historians of the school closing crisis alike to acknowledge the futility of ever pinpointing the "definitive" meaning or impact of the events in the county. Each of the young people interviewed by Turner interpreted the events differently, drew different lessons from the crisis, and reacted in ways determined not only by events, but by personal, familial, and temperamental factors as well. With all the unpredictability and inconsistency of real adolescents, they searched for meaning in their individual experiences, fumbled to find the appropriate words in which to express themselves, and

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[516] See Charles S. Johnson, *Growing Up in the Black Belt: Negro Youth in the Rural South* (Washington, DC: The American Council on Education, 1941; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1967) and E. Franklin Frazier, *Negro Youth at the Crossways: Their Personality Development in the Middle States* (Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1940).

followed their diverse conclusions down different paths of reaction. With the complexity of real human beings, they chose their paths as historical actors. Their common age, racial classification, and Prince Edward nativity did not give them identical dreams, desires, or convictions about how the world should operate.

On the issue of solidarity and the bonds of racial/gender/class unity, cultural commentator June Jordan once wrote that, "Much organizational grief could be avoided if people understood that partnership in misery does not necessarily provide for partnership for change. When we get the monsters off our backs all of us may want to run in very different directions." Jordan's musings on the complex factors of identification unifying and dividing diverse individuals highlight what she termed "the difference between a common identity that has been imposed and the individual identity any one of us will choose, once she gains that chance." Caught up in the movement to freedom, Turner's interviewees grappled with the continuities and changes accompanying a people in transition. Yet even in struggling to define themselves as individuals, they demonstrated the endurance of the ideas, values, and concerns that defined southern black youth twenty years earlier in Johnson and Frazier's studies.[517]

They sought "escape" from the humiliations and injustices of Jim Crow: many through education, some through active protest, some through geographical exodus from the South, some through financial success and social mobility, and others through gang affiliation and physical violence. They almost universally decried the boredom and isolation of rural life and endowed education with quasi-magical powers to transform

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[517] June Jordan, "Report from the Bahamas," in *On Call: Political Essays* (Boston: South End Press, 1985): 39-49.

their own lives and collapse the inequalities between rich and poor and black and white. They yearned for professional careers, college educations, good wages, excitement and social activities, handsome, wealthy husbands, opportunities to leave the county, and opportunities to turn the tables upon whites. St. Clair Drake's introduction to the 1967 edition of *Growing Up in the Black Belt* accurately describes the 1963 interviews as well as the late 1930's ones when he notes that:

> Cries of anguish frequently burst out from these pages as well as caustic criticisms by the youth of a world they never made, and bitterness over the legacy of the past bequeathed to them by a hostile white society and by impotent Negro institutions: disorganized families that could not help them to get ahead and churches that tried to fix their eyes upon heaven....They reveal the thoughts of young people groping for a feeling of dignity within a social system that makes them ambivalent toward themselves and other Negroes. But persistently they search for their identity, full of irrepressible vitality and animated by a drive to escape.[518]

The majority of Turner's interviewees strongly supported the pickets, commenting that the demonstrations would "make the whites take notice," that they enhanced black "togetherness," and that they evidenced willingness to "fight for our rights." Fourteen year old Carlton Terry, whose desire to engage in direct action emerged while living with an NAACP official in New Bedford, insisted that the schools would have reopened before 1963 had blacks launched an immediate protest in 1959. His words were sharp and to the point. "The older people just don't want to move," he told Turner, "they think they are living just fine." Terry's older sisters attended Moton High with James Samuel Williams, and he regarded the young minister as a surrogate big brother.

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[518] St. Clair Drake, "Introduction to the 1967 Edition," foreward to *Growing Up in the Black Belt*, p. xv. For more on the culture of segregated society, see Bertram W. Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937) and Charles S. Johnson, *Patterns of Negro Segregation* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1943).

As Bob Smith commented in 1965, time accelerated in Prince Edward County after 1951. Though only ten years older, some of the 1951 strike veterans served as mentors to the closings generation, helping to organize and staff the picket lines and sit-ins. When Terry wanted to join the ranks of the demonstrators, he offered his services to Williams, who put him to work making placards and distributing boycott notices.[519]

Nineteen year old Frances Hayes, one of the AFSC's Berea students, opinioned that, "By now some of the parents just don't care whether schools open or not. They have given up hope, but they are not doing anything about it." Noting the lack of adult participation in the demonstrations, she ascribed the older generation's hesitancy to the fact that, "they work for the whites and don't want to be involved." A fourteen year old girl insisted that, "If the people had demonstrated and boycotted earlier like now, we could have done something." Eighteen year old Madeline Gibson, whose family sent her to South Norwalk, Connecticut to complete her freshman and sophomore years, anticipated that the demonstrations would prove effective. An active participant, she predicted that the picket lines would drive many white store owners out of business. A sixteen year old from a family of ten children joined the picket lines in hopes that if they proved successful, young people would no longer have to leave the county. This young woman, relocated to Cumberland County, noted that the exodus of so many of the teenagers made remaining in the area extremely boring. When she joined the demonstrations, her mother warned her, "that if I got in jail, she wouldn't come and get

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[519] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 233-235; Carlton Terry, Interview with Ruth Turner, Summer 1963, p. 18, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

me." In order to participate, she came to stay with her brother in Farmville, who agreed to support her actions.[520]

One of her sisters, out of school since 1959, joined the demonstrations out of a desire for reopened schools and a good job. Twenty year old McCarthy Eanes, another active participant, reflected that demonstrations were long overdue, but that older people were too fearful to instigate them. The thought that "we need freedom...there is no use in keeping on like the old people," stirred him to join the pickets. A sixteen year old boy whose family found schools for him two years out of the four commented that without demonstrations, "white people think they are still the boss." He forfeited a trip to North Carolina to join the picket lines. Another sixteen year old hoped to see some of the downtown stores open positions to blacks – he thought he would enjoy being a cashier – and achieve the right to "go places where whites go." Other members of his family, including his mother and sister, joined him on the picket lines, but aware that not all African Americans supported the goals of the civil rights movement, he noted that some "are as much against us as the whites."[521]

A sixteen year old girl, a three year placement veteran, told Turner that she had long thought demonstrations in Farmville a good idea. An active participant with her mother's full support, she felt that the organized actions proved that "our people can work together and fight for what is theirs and they have the guts." Another placement student hoped that the demonstrations would provide a wakeup call to the community.

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[520] Number 11, Interview with Ruth Turner, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Number 24, ibid; Number 4, ibid; Number 6, ibid.

[521] Number 7, ibid; Number 12, ibid; Number 8, ibid; Number 9, ibid.

Acknowledging that fear of losing one's job and seeing one's child injured are significant hurdles to cross, he nonetheless maintained that blacks "will get nothing if they don't demonstrate." With his father's support, the boy, slated to enter ninth grade in the fall, went to jail with the group at Farmville Baptist. Twenty year old John Hicks, whose family sent him away from the county three of the four years, enabling him to graduate from high school in New Jersey, and eighteen year old Oland Smith participated in hopes of reopening the schools for their younger siblings. Out of school since 1959, Oland promised his mother on her deathbed that he would graduate. He told Turner that, "I have to do the best I can to maybe get my sister and brother into school. I'll try anything once but not twice."[522]

A fourteen year old boy termed the demonstrations "something I had to take part in, that had to be done...I knew I was fighting for something and I wanted to fight." A seventeen year old who spent the past three years in Baltimore with his father noted that many young people passively accepted the status quo because taught by the older generation "that the white man is some god." He considered many of the older folks so accustomed to segregation that they assumed "that the white man is going to do what he wants to anyway," an attitude that sapped their spirit to fight. Corralled into participation by James Samuel Williams, he originally feared going to jail. The longer he marched, however, the more he internalized the courage of those around him, and when arrest finally came, he found himself no longer afraid. He viewed the purpose of the demonstrations as winning the right to use public facilities and forcing the reopening of

[522] Number 42, ibid; Number 56, ibid; Number 43, ibid; Number 47, ibid.

the schools on an integrated basis, "so that children can get to know for themselves what white people are like instead of being influenced by older people."[523]

The generation gap profoundly strained relationships in the county that summer. While some teenagers recognized the older generation's reasons for avoiding direct confrontation, others ridiculed their elders as cowardly Uncle Toms. Caught up in the calculated recklessness inherent to launching direct action, many of the youth leaders underestimated the potential backlash. Unlike their comrades in Mississippi, white authorities in Prince Edward did not imprison juvenile protesters or sentence them to terms in reform school. Rather, they released them into the custody of their parents, confident that the strictures of family authority would prevent them from returning to the streets. Authorities focused on finding legal and bureaucratic avenues to circumvent protest, including enjoining adult leaders from seeking teenage participation on the picket lines. The comparative absence of physical violence in Prince Edward County did render street protest less immediately dangerous than in many other parts of the South. But older black residents anticipated other avenues of retaliation.

Though many Prince Edward teenagers worked full-time and bore significant financial responsibility for supporting their families, adolescents' age, status in the community, and more flexible approach to employment shielded them from some of the repercussions inherent to adult participation. The burdens of family responsibility weighed heavily on the shoulders of those over twenty-one. As heads of household, they recognized their economic vulnerability in a white-dominated society. Knowing Prince Edward whites as they did, many willing to take other courageous actions in the struggle

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[523] Number 20, ibid; Number 21, ibid.

drew the line at brazenly flouting the Virginian traditions of subtlety and indirectness. Some employers fired their teenage workers for participation. Most secured new positions more quickly than unemployed adults might have. Others accepted their young employees' involvement, attributing it to youthful rebellion or acknowledging the fact that they did not possess the leverage necessary to demand their withdrawal. With their adult workforce however, many employers hoarded and exercised the power to threaten the very lifeblood of their employees' families.

Not all interviewees, however, expressed negative feelings toward the older generation. Twenty-one year old Lawrence Reid left the county in 1962 and earned a New York State Equivalency Certificate. In the summer of 1963, he was working as an institutional attendant at Grasslands Hospital in Valhalla, NY, and had hopes of becoming a laboratory technician. He worried that apathy posed the greatest challenge to progress in Prince Edward. Referencing the passion that fired the population when the schools first closed, he feared that the desire to return to daily life now outweighed outrage. However, he drew encouragement from the rise in teenage activism, noting that "the younger people know that they need education to make it." Lawrence possessed no burning desire to integrate Hampden-Sydney, but vowed that if the need for a James Meredith[524] presented itself, he would willingly volunteer.[525]

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[524] Air Force veteran James Howard Meredith entered at the University of Mississippi in September 1962. His enrollment sparked both a riot and one of the most memorable federal/state confrontations of the civil rights era. As the first African American student to breach the walls of this bastion of segregation, Meredith's name became synonymous with attempts to integrate previously all-white institutions. See William Doyle, *An American Insurrection: James Meredith and the Battle of Oxford, Mississippi, 1962* (New York: Anchor Books, 2001).

A sixteen year old admitted that he joined the demonstrations because "everyone else was going," but seemed to fully grasp their objective: "If we keep on marching, picketing, demonstrating, they will get tired of seeing us down there." This young man, who participated in the placement program from 1960-62, believed the rumors that the schools would open in 1962 and did not sign up for a third year in the program. He repeatedly mentioned his desire to find an educational opportunity for the upcoming year. A girl from a large family, also sixteen, wanted to participate, but could not afford to quit her job ironing piece work at Star Cleaners. As she told Ruth Turner, "we are rather poor and I have to help out." Quite a few of the older teenagers found themselves in the same predicament as this young woman – supportive in principle but unable to relinquish their jobs in order to walk the picket lines. The laundry worker hoped that the demonstrations would result in open schools and increased wages for black workers. She deeply resented the fact that her employers paid a white coworker a substantially higher salary and allowed her to wait on customers, while she herself ironed from the beginning to the end of a shift.[526]

A sixteen year old boy who participated in one day of demonstrations told Turner that his parents did not oppose his participation, but his work schedule severely limited his availability. Another interviewee, however, insisted that the boy's parents forbade him to participate out of fear of his arrest. A fifteen year old hoped that the demonstrations would result in "freedom, open schools, and integration," but did not join

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[525] Number 33, Interview with Ruth Turner, 1963 Box, Folder 38558, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[526] Number 14, ibid; Number 15, ibid.

the picket lines because his parents would not give their permission. Another girl, a resident of a remote part of the county, wished to take part but possessed no transportation. Lacking her father's support, she eventually gave up the idea. Incidentally, this young woman, a participant in the 1962 SCEP program, so impressed Ruth Turner that she recommended AFSC placement for her for 1962-63. Her father, however, refused his permission.[527]

Nineteen year old Howard Harris, Jr. admired the "togetherness" aspect of the demonstrations. Though he had not particularly enjoyed school prior to 1959, after four years of odd jobs and food service positions at Longwood, he wished to go back. Howard hoped that the demonstrations could secure the reopening of the schools and open up new jobs to blacks. He hoped to drive a truck someday. His grandmother, with whom he resided, opposed street protest, but did not interfere with his participation. Bessie Reed, also nineteen, a placement student who graduated from Holyoke High School (Holyoke, Massachusetts) in May 1963, described the demonstrations as "the only way to get what we want." A natural leader who spent fifty-five hours in jail with Turner, Bessie hoped to leave the county as soon as possible. She found life in Prince Edward empty, and felt that "Negroes are not doing anything to help themselves, they talk instead of giving opinions to people who count." One of the few interviewees to find any sort of silver lining in the closings, she commented that "it made us think for ourselves and not depend on them [whites]." Bessie's parents approved of her decision to participate, but nonetheless feared for her safety.[528]

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[527] Number 16, ibid; Number 17, ibid; Number 18, ibid.

[528] Number 23, ibid; Number 29, ibid.

A fifteen year old admitted to feeling some resentment toward both whites and blacks alike, noting that "Negroes won't do anything, they are even scared to put their names on paper because they might lose their jobs." However, he remained hopeful that the growing spirit of confrontation might encourage some older blacks to take action "to get the white man off their backs." Committed to staying in school, he sought every opportunity possible for placement. After a year at home, Rev. Griffin found a place for him in Warren County from 1960-62. In 1962-63, he participated in the VTA placement program, which placed him in Essex County, forty-three miles from Richmond. A farsighted and unusually reflective young man, he feared that when the schools reopened, they would be unorganized and chaotic, and that the wide range of ages at the same ability level would create a great deal of embarrassment for the older students. With dreams of becoming a math or history teacher, he took his studies seriously and admitted that even if the schools reopened, he would prefer to board outside the county again. He liked many things about Farmville, particularly the size and quiet, but could not accept the fact that "there are no places for Negroes to go," commenting that he would prefer to live in the North. His grandmother disapproved of the Virginia Union/Hampton sit-in at the coffee shop, but he joined the picket lines anyway, reminding her that "we will live here after you are gone." He hoped that participating in the demonstrations would give his future children a reason to be proud of their father.[529]

One seventeen year old also wanted the schools to reopen, but exhibited a similar hesitancy to gamble with her own education. After three years with an aunt in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she recognized that her urban high school offered

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[529] Number 30, ibid.

opportunities that a reopened Moton High would not. Her hopes of becoming a secretary made the Cambridge program, which offered commercial course honor students summer internships, difficult to resist. Nevertheless, she felt that blacks must stick together and that "it was time they started doing something." Though she had not yet participated at the time of her interview with Turner, she stated that her parents had given their permission – although her father remained apprehensive about violence – and that she intended to get involved. Like the VTA boy, she preferred the quiet of Farmville to the hustle and bustle of the big city, but declined to comment on whether she would ever return to Prince Edward on a permanent basis.[530]

Nineteen year old Phillip Walker completed the seventh grade in 1959 and worked as a janitor at Southside Community Hospital. Though not actively involved in the demonstrations, he felt confident that the withholding of black purchasing power could crumble white resistance. A fifteen year old who completed the fifth grade during the last year of open schools, but totaled only five months of schooling in the years since felt that the demonstrations proved America's status as a free county and that blacks could "go ahead" if they worked hard and put their heads together. Many, however, felt that Prince Edward blacks possessed insufficient interest in "going ahead." Eighteen year old Kitty Johnson, a three year placement veteran, insisted that too many class divisions scarred the black community, that "Negroes don't stick together, there are too many Aunt Janes and Uncle Toms," and that apathy reigned. Another placement student commented

[530] Number 32, ibid.

in annoyance that many blacks "really believe that things are all right as they are and would be happy with segregation."[531]

Many of the young people considered the well-to-do Willie Redd the foremost example of everything wrong with the older generation. A self-made man regarded by many whites as the leading member of the black community, Redd was a contractor by trade. Deeply committed to the cause of black education – seeing it as the salvation of the race – he sent his six children to some of the nation's leading black colleges. He disliked the rudeness of "whites only" signs, but willingly adhered to a voluntary form of separation. Powerful whites filled the majority of spaces in his social circle. A close friend of Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties state president Robert Crawford, he never doubted that whites would close the schools to prevent integration. He opposed the 1951 strike, the lawsuit, and the demonstrations, continuing to insist that the NAACP suit did not speak for the people of the county. "I'm not saying these Negroes like segregation," he told black reporter Carl Rowan in 1956. "Nobody likes to be segregated. But when this fight started they didn't have no more mind to fight for integration than I've got to fly to Chicago tonight." A First Baptist congregant, Redd deeply resented L.F. Griffin's outspokenness and attitude of "nothing to lose," once chastising him that, "maybe you don't have anything to lose but some of your members have."[532]

A lonely figure throughout the crisis years, Redd exemplified the passing of an era in Virginia race relations. His white friends became more standoffish, and as he once

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[531] Number 55, ibid; Number 38, ibid; Number 41, ibid; Number 35, ibid.

[532] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 224-228; Carl Rowan, "Negroes, Too, Turn on Minister Who Urged Integration," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 4 January 1956.

commented when asked about his black acquaintances, "I don't think I ever had any colored friends." A group of teenage demonstrators followed him through the streets of Farmville chanting "Uncle Tom." On another occasion, they surrounded his car as he sat in it and rocked it back and forth, an action that occasioned a sharp reprimand from Griffin. A sixteen year old who once worked for Redd told Ruth Turner that the contractor, whom he tagged "the main Uncle Tom of the town," treated his employees decently until whites came around. "Then he started to holler and make you work till you sweat," he noted bitterly. R.C. Smith acknowledged that Redd's opinions certainly fell outside the mainstream of black thought in 1963, but believed strongly that his openness to the goals of the civil rights movement was on the increase. Smith insisted that the vilification Redd received from the teenage community stunted this growth.[533]

As dissenters from the black community, Redd and his compatriot Bluit Andrews suffered in ways similar to white dissenters, finding themselves ostracized, ridiculed, and resented by their neighbors. Their experiences demonstrate a very human response to a cracking social system. An era does not pass overnight, but it does happen more quickly than many observers realize. In the midst of profound transformation, some cling to the old ways while others seize upon the new, but all attempt to negotiate a world suddenly without clear guidelines. In his attempts to maintain the tactics and strategies that had proven successful in the past, Redd stepped out of sync with his community, going from leader in 1951 to outcast in 1963.

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[533] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 224-228; Number 19, interview with Ruth Turner, ibid.

Nonetheless, not every young person in the county in the summer of 1963 shared the majority opinion of segregated schools. A seventeen year old who at the time he spoke with Ruth Turner had not yet made up his mind whether he would join the demonstrations stated his willingness to accept segregated schools. Twenty year old George Holmes considered the pre-1959 schools adequate, noting that "integration is all right, but if they didn't want to integrate with us, why bother?" Phillip Walker termed integration "okay," but noted that he had no problem with a dual school system. A seventeen year old girl admitted that she fundamentally disliked the idea of integrated schools, but would attend if necessary. It is interesting to note that all four of these teenagers had no schooling since 1959, thus prompting the logical conclusion that open public schools, even if segregated and strapped for resources, provided a better alternative than no schools at all.[534]

Conversely, many of the students who boarded away from the county and experienced integrated and/or northern schools expressed sharper criticism of the pre-1959 status quo. One placement student told Turner that students learned little in the county's black school system. Looking back, Bessie Reed criticized teachers' practice of not moving on to a new topic until everyone understood the material, a practice that often left half of the textbook unfinished at the end of the school year. A girl who lived with host families in New York and Washington, D.C. felt that white students in integrated schools were more friendly than Prince Edward white youth – "they laugh and talk like average children." A boy who stayed with his father in Baltimore for three years

[534] Number 25, ibid; Number 51, ibid; Number 55, ibid; Number 2, ibid.

believed that integrated schools provided better courses and more advantages for black pupils. His social group in his city school included many whites.[535]

A sixteen year old placement student said she would return to the county only if the schools opened on an integrated basis. A boy placed in Pennsylvania commented that integrated schools were fine "as long as you make friends," musing that he worked harder during his two years in an integrated school than at any other time in his life. John Hicks enjoyed his integrated school in New Jersey, where he thought "more learning was possible," but had a negative experience with a track coach whom he believed deliberately ruined his scholarship chances out of racial prejudice. Frances Hayes, who thoroughly enjoyed her Berea experience, preferred integrated schools, commenting that they "do bring people together." A boy who finished seventh grade in 1959 and had not attended school since expressed less optimism. He imagined that integrated schools might eventually prove palatable, but predicted a fight a day – some initiated by white students, others by black ones.[536]

All but one of the fifty-five teenagers with whom Turner spoke expressed an interest in returning to school. A significant number, however, probably underestimated the potential obstacles in their way: loss of income, diminished academic skills, severe frustration, and acute embarrassment. The vast majority said they expected no special problems in returning to the classroom, either an honest statement of opinion or an attempt at positive thinking. A few, however, volunteered additional information. One employed teenager recognized that the loss of her wages would put a strain on her family

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[535] Number 39, ibid; Number 29, ibid; Number 49, ibid; Number 21, ibid.

[536] Number 40, ibid; Number 14, ibid; Number 11, ibid; Number 5, ibid.

but hoped to return anyway, envisioning that perhaps she could attend school in the winter and work in the summer to earn money for school clothes and books. Twenty year old Samuel Walker, working as a janitor, acknowledged that going back might prove difficult - even though he earned good grades prior to 1959 – but hoped to try. After the closings, a seventeen year old from a large family assumed responsibility for running the family farm, freeing his father to hire himself out for wages. He admitted uncertainty as to whether returning to school constituted a realistic possibility, vacillating between "I think so" and "for certain."[537]

A sixteen year old in school two years out of the four thought that she would have no particular problems returning to Moton, but commented that "other older children would have to get adjusted with younger children." This young woman, who hoped to become a secretary, predicted that quite a few would not return, explaining that many of the older girls had began to raise families and quite a few of the boys had become disgusted with the situation and lost interest. One seventeen year old boy's return to school depended upon whether or not he would have to marry and/or make arrangements for the support of his newborn child. Speaking from personal experience, he observed that if the schools had remained open, "plenty of girls would not be pregnant." Two girls expressed an interest in returning despite marriage and children, but faced even higher obstacles than other youth. A sixteen year old whose parents moved to Cumberland County in 1961 to get her back in school anticipated numerous roadblocks in the pathways of her former classmates. She worried that teenagers would be embarrassed about being placed in lower grades with smaller children or would not return because

[537] Number 15, ibid; Number 1, ibid; Number 25, ibid.

they had married. She also feared that "white parents would push their children against us and there would be problems getting together."[538]

Twenty year old George Holmes remained out of school all four years. Though not currently employed, he held confidence in his job skills and candidly admitted that he would rather not return to school than be so far behind. McCarthy Eanes, on the other hand, also twenty, possessed a strong desire to return to school and learn a trade. McCarthy and his twenty siblings all remained in the county throughout the closings, as his parents did not believe they could send some away for an education and deny it to the others. He spent the four years in the tobacco fields and had no desire to remain on the farm for life. When the Free Schools opened in September, McCarthy enrolled for classes and took a job driving a school bus to supplement the family income. He played an instrumental role in facilitating the enrollment of George and Brenda Abernathy, the Free Schools' third and fourth white pupils.[539]

A surprising number of the young people interviewed still liked Prince Edward, describing it as quiet, peaceful and beautiful. They listed segregation, lack of jobs, and the school situation as the county's biggest problems, often commenting that they would settle in Prince Edward if the schools reopened and more employment opportunities developed for African Americans. One young man commented that the county "would be nice" if integrated. Many mentioned the pull of one's hometown and proximity to

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[538] Number 36, ibid; Number 48, ibid; Number 45, ibid; Number 2, ibid; Number 37, ibid.

[539] Number 51, ibid; Number 12, ibid; Paul Nussbaum and Annette John-Hall, "Fight for School Equality Still Leaves Scars for Many," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* 12 May 2004; Sullivan, p. 96-98.

family members as reasons to remain. One reflected that he liked Prince Edward County, but not the town of Farmville nor the people in it.[540]

Others termed white residents "right rough and hateful," commenting that "anybody will stick a knife in your back." Several did mention one or two white persons with whom they maintained a pleasant relationship, but insisted that most whites possessed great hostility toward the interests of black people. One twenty-one year old noted bitterly that "you can't walk down the street without they're [sic] doing something." She disliked the fact that "we can't have freedom like they can," but also resented upwardly mobile African Americans whom she ridiculed for "trying to be higher than whites." Another young man, one of the arrested demonstrators and a member of the "Ely Street gang," a group of teenage boys from the heavily working class Ely Street, expressed similar resentment. Commenting that several boys would not associate with him and his friends, he observed that some blacks "think they are better than other people and try to have more." [541]

Those who took a dim view of the county often mentioned that they would not settle in an environment lacking freedom. One fifteen year old termed the area not just backward, but "from Civil War times." A veteran of the placement program commented that, "I wouldn't live in Farmville for nothing." In this young man's opinion, the reopening of the schools would not change the fact that "there is no future in terms of higher education and better jobs." Another, who nurtured hopes of becoming an art

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[540] Number 6, interview with Ruth Turner; Number 15, ibid; Number 38, ibid; Number 20, ibid; Number 43, ibid; Number 9, ibid.

[541] Number 12, ibid; Number 8, ibid; Number 20, ibid; Number 45, ibid; Number 52, ibid.

teacher, wanted to live near her family but recognized the slim chances of making a living as a black artist in Prince Edward County. A third reflected that she had once vowed never to return, but nevertheless commented that, "If I can come back and live as a person, not as a Negro, maybe...I wouldn't want my kids to grow up being treated as I have." A young man who finished his senior year at Kittrell before joining the Navy remarked that despite his preference for small towns over cities, he would never return to the county because it offered no future for an educated black person. Some disliked country and small town life in general, noting that "there is too much hard work to do on the farm," "there is nothing here," and "everyone knows everyone."[542]

Many held opinions on why whites had closed the schools, the majority of which were insightful, carefully considered, and at times, self-critical. One young woman who finished seventh grade in 1959 felt that white residents opposed integration because "some of the colored mothers don't care about their kids; therefore they think they are better than even those Negroes who are clean and well-mannered." Another ascribed the problem to old traditions and beliefs that characterized blacks as lazy and undeserving. One of the placement students observed that many of the whites most ardently opposed to integration were older people responsible for the care of their grandchildren. "They think we will bother or fight them if they go to school with us," he commented, suggesting that more than a few older members of the black community held similar concerns. Another

[542] Number 35, ibid; Number 39, ibid; Number 11, ibid; Number 9, ibid; Number 22, ibid; Number 33, ibid; Number 34, ibid; Number 42, ibid.

young man remarked that whites simply disapproved of education for African Americans under any conditions.[543]

Two thought that whites closed the schools out of jealousy over the fact that the new Moton High outshone Farmville High. Another ascribed the entire situation to economics. "Sometimes I try to put myself in their place," he commented. "If I had someone to work for me, cook my meals, and could know that his son would never compete with mine for a job, I guess I would fight to keep it, too." One sixteen year old girl suggested that whites still preferred to think of blacks as slaves, out of fear that someday the tables might turn and cast them into the subordinate position. Two others offered similar explanations, commenting that whites are afraid that "if they give our race a chance, we'll get ahead" and that "Negroes will get too much power and get too close to them." Another placement student felt that "they oppose our going to school together because then we would receive the same education, the same jobs, and the same amount of money, and they wouldn't be better than we are." One kind-hearted young woman felt sure that "they don't know how they are hurting a child...I can't believe they will willingly hurt a six year old. They either don't know or they are sick or something.[544]

Most expressed a significant amount of anger toward whites, but only one intimated at violence, expressing a desire to "kill them all." Another, described as "a handsome boy with dancing eyes," noted that he had no white friends, commenting that "if we're not decent enough to eat [in local restaurants], we're not decent enough to be friends." One of the Ely Street boys engaged in regular battles with a group of white

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[543] Number 7, ibid; Number 21, ibid; Number 14, ibid; Number 5, ibid.
[544] Number 8, ibid; Number 43, ibid; Number 34, ibid; Number 37, ibid; Number 41, ibid; Number 56, ibid; Number 42, ibid.

teenagers who rode through his neighborhood throwing bricks at pedestrians. He and his "gang" retaliated by throwing bricks at white-driven cars passing down Ely Street. Quite a few commented that although they did not hate whites categorically, they had few relations with them and knew little about them. John Hicks noted that he and his white neighbors never spoke. Samuel Walker reminisced that he had once had white friends, but they left the county after the closing of the schools. A seventeen year old girl named one white couple, former employers, as polite and friendly people who encouraged her to call them by their first names, but felt that "the majority would pat you on the back one day and mistreat you the next." A fifteen year old boy playing a leading role in the demonstrations observed that whites "act as though they are always doing you a favor." A talkative seventeen year old with a flair for a creative turn of phrase perhaps best summed it up when he commented that, "they are wrong with two left shoes trying to get one on one right foot."[545]

Despite these feelings, a few expressed a pragmatic desire to be white in order to "go to school and have freedom." One boy wished for a skin color that would provide "all the things and privileges he [a white man] has of doing things." In a comment sure to strike fear into the hearts of many white supremacists, a sixteen year old admitted that his friends sometimes wished they were white in order to date the girls at Longwood. "Sometimes I agree," he reflected. "Sometimes whites look like they have more looks than the colored." Samuel Walker, however, commented that, "I wouldn't want to be white; it might make me against the colored and I don't want to be against nobody." One

[545] Number 51, ibid; Number 13, ibid; Number 19, ibid; Number 43, ibid; Number 1, ibid; Number 31, ibid; Number 35, ibid; Number 48, ibid.

younger boy echoed this sentiment, stating that he was glad to be black because "if I were white, I'd be doing the same things they do."[546]

The majority of those interviewed possessed a strong sense of black identity. One boy cherished his African heritage because he thought whites were "kind of weak" and more likely to "do something to themselves" (i.e. suicide) in difficult times. Another laughed that "nobody could pay me to be white!" One girl commented that she took pride in her blackness, pointing out that many young white women constantly attempted to darken their skin through sunbathing and dark stockings. A young woman who stated that she hated all whites noted emphatically that "Negroes can do anything better." Eighteen year old Oland Smith anticipated an eventual turning of the racial tables. "Everything that goes up has to come down," he reasoned. "One day we'll be on top, Negroes all over the world." Many expressed their opinions more matter-of-factly, stating that color could not be changed, that they had never been anything other than black, or that "that's what God made me." A seventeen year old explained that although whites "can do more," blacks could do just as much if provided with similar opportunities. One fifteen year old girl's response revealed both her own sense of "race" and the reality of life for blacks in Prince Edward County when she commented that, "I don't feel bad, not exactly. Sometimes I wish I weren't in this county. It doesn't bother me so much now, but later when I want a job..."[547]

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[546] Number 5, ibid; Number 6, ibid; Number 14, ibid; Number 52, ibid; Number 1, ibid; Number 19, ibid.

[547] Number 18, ibid; Number 8, ibid; Number 13, ibid; Number 15, ibid; Number 45, ibid; Number 47, ibid; Number 6, ibid; Number 12, ibid; Number 57, ibid; Number 22, ibid.

Standing on the cusp of the black consciousness movement, the vast majority expressed discomfort with the term "black," preferring "Negro" or "colored." A few years before the massive shift in terminology and self-identification, all of the teenagers responded negatively to the label "black," which they considered demeaning and crude. One fourteen year old pointed out no one's skin is actually black or white, describing the term "black" as "not exactly real bad, but not proper." If reference to race proved absolutely necessary, he preferred "colored." But under any other circumstances, he noted wryly, "I have a name." Some equated "black" with "nigger," deeming both cruel insults. Several stated that they would not mind being called "black" in African American company, but would take insult in the presence of a white person, even if the term originated with another African American. Others stated that the label would arouse their anger no matter who used it. "I don't like people calling me names," said one fifteen year old. Nineteen year old Phillip Walker responded indignantly, stating that, "I think I'm just as good as the next man." Within two to three years, the black consciousness movement would profoundly alter the language of racial self-identification, offering the term "black" as a means of repudiating white-assigned terminology and asserting pan-African solidarity. But in 1963, black teenagers still bristled at the label, no doubt influenced – whether consciously or not – by the complicated relationship between skin color, status, and social mobility dating back to slavery.[548]

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[548] Number 2 ibid; Number 18, ibid; Number 20, ibid; Number 1, ibid; Number 19, ibid; Number 17, ibid; Number 55, ibid. For more on this, see Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: The New Press, 1974); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World The Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage

Most did not see the Black Muslims as the answer to black Americans' prayers, deeming the idea of a separate state impractical and not worth the effort. Uncomfortable with the emphasis on segregation, they commented that "they want something we shouldn't have...segregation is not what we're working for." Bessie Reed noted in frustration that "Black supremacy is what we're fighting against. No one on earth is supreme to any other; we should leave that to God." Some deemed the Muslims "sick" or suspected that "something is wrong with them." A seventeen year old who heard Black Muslim speakers in Boston termed them "overly confused."[549]

Lawrence Reid, who emigrated to New York to pursue an education, agreed that "the emphasis on the Negro losing his identity was good," but found the Fruit of Islam eerily reminiscent of the Nazis. He thought the framework of a separate state encouraged corruption and feared that an all-black political community would ultimately prove isolating and boring. He derided Malcolm X as an ex-convict who "couldn't lead us anywhere," commenting that he possessed little understanding of "what the Negro wants." As a model for black leadership, he preferred Jomo Kenyatta and James Baldwin. "He [Baldwin] has good ideas and he is not exactly nonviolent," he reflected, "but he is not violent either. He appeals to the intellect, but uses common sense. He thinks before going out and obviously knows what he is talking about. He knows Harlem and knows what the Negro wants."[550]

Books, 1972); and Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[549] Number 56, ibid; Number 42, ibid; Number 29, ibid; Number 39, ibid; Number 32, ibid.

[550] Number 33, ibid.

Interestingly enough, only students who resided outside the county offered opinions on the Nation of Islam. They undoubtedly had greater exposure to the national civil rights scene, the Muslim communities in large cities, and the philosophical question of segregation than their peers who remained in the county. However, those who stayed in Prince Edward may have personally interacted with a small group of Black Muslims from Philadelphia who established a community in the Green Bay section of the county during the early years of the crisis. The community preached the gospel of self-sufficiency, arguing that the closed schools constituted a blessing in disguise, providing blacks an opportunity to establish their own community-controlled institutions. Rev. Griffin derived great amusement from the Muslims' presence, recounting to R.C. Smith:

> One of them greeted me in Hebrew, and I answered him in Hebrew and this impressed him very much. They started calling me Brother Francis X, or I guess it was just Brother Francis, really; they save the X for those who are really with them...I told them I couldn't accept their religion or their politics or their views about the white race being a race of devils, but I had to agree with their economics. I mean about Negroes building up their own businesses and banding together to help each other economically. I think they are right about that."

The community did not thrive, and eventually moved on without shaking the foundations of the Farmville economy, but not before providing drivers along the rural roads of Green Bay the vision of a startling blend of two cultures: the mailbox of Willy Lee X.[551]

If those polled about their feelings on the Nation of Islam exhibited near unanimity, those asked about their commitment to the philosophy and practice of nonviolence provided widely diverse reactions. A seventeen year old girl stated that, "I don't think I could take but so much; if they were my size, I might fight back." A sixteen year old termed nonviolence "wonderful" in theory, but totally unhelpful if one met a

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[551] Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 203-204.

man with a gun on a dark night. Nineteen year old Frances Hayes agreed, commenting that nonviolence is a "good policy to go by," but noting that she herself could only take so much. One boy remarked that "nonviolence don't sound right – they will keep taking advantage of you." Most of the teenagers interviewed came from home environments where strong words and actions won respect and the demands of nonviolence ran heavily against the grain. Some recognized the importance of remaining nonviolent while on the picket lines – agreeing that any kind of violence could provoke a riot – but others found it difficult to restrain themselves when insulted. Profoundly irritated when a white man winked at her, one hot-tempered picketer retorted that he should "go wink at his mother."[552]

More than one of the teenagers interviewed tangled with white youth on their way home from mass meetings that summer. A sixteen year old retaliated by throwing rocks when taunted from a car admitted that he did not feel bound by the strictures of nonviolence outside the demonstrations. George Holmes, who threw a bottle at another heckler's car, noted that "it might be the best way, but I couldn't take nobody spitting in my face." Oland Smith, recently involved with a Jersey City gang, agreed to "put up with" nonviolence, but admitted that he did not find it personally convincing, commenting that, "I have been in Jersey City and they don't take nothing."[553]

A few recognized a strategic value in nonviolence, commenting that it scares and shames whites and "keeps them worrying." A fifteen year old pointed out that violent protest would result in too many injuries to carry on. Another observed that his

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[552] Number 3, interview with Ruth Turner, ibid; Number 4, ibid; Number 11, ibid; Number 5, ibid; Number 29, ibid; Number 10, ibid.

[553] Number 19, ibid; Number 52, ibid; Number 51, ibid; Number 47, ibid.

attendance at the SNCC workshops effectively convinced him that protecting oneself proved easier than hitting back. One of the young men who stated that he would practice nonviolence while demonstrating, but "couldn't carry the philosophy all the time," explained that demonstrations differed from general racial confrontation in that they served a cause and occurred within the boundaries of anticipated police protection. Howard Harris, Jr., however, adamantly insisted that hope of a peaceful future rested on nonviolence, commenting that, "if colored people hit them back, they [whites] will say there is no reason to get together as friends." One of the placement students alluded to the concept of a vicious circle, observing that "violence simply leads to more fighting." Another thought that passive resistance put pressure on the structures of government, but that more importantly, "if we don't adopt nonviolence, we will be no better than they."[554]

None of the respondents spoke of the "ethic of love" that had so intrigued the early SNCC activists or the Christian/Gandhian principles that influenced Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy. Instead, pragmatic concerns shaped their attitudes. It is interesting to note that the convictions of the placement students, those closest to the Quaker "peace testimony," spanned a fairly wide spectrum. They spoke of the cycle of violence and the importance of maintaining a higher standard than one's opponents, but also of nonviolence as a tool for demonstrations rather than a way of life. All in all, however, the placement students placed more confidence in the strategic value of passive resistance than their peers and expressed more concerns over the effects of violence.

Some of the respondents offered more general opinions about American politics or ideas of what they would do if President for a week. A sixteen year old boy stated that

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[554] Number 12, ibid; Number 42, ibid; Number 30, ibid; Number 14, ibid; Number 35; ibid; Number 23, ibid; Number 39, ibid; Number 56, ibid.

he would open public accommodations to all, "give the colored the same rights as whites," and allow African American men to date white women. His agenda also included redistribution of wealth: "I would take everything from the whites. Everything they got, they cheated for, they cheated colored people out of money for. They did not get it honestly." A seventeen year old girl took a different tack, listing her priorities as reopening the schools, sending poor children to college, and lifting the barriers against black advancement in the workforce and access to public accommodations. Another girl stated that she would personally come to Prince Edward County, since it "disgraces the country and is the worst place in the United States," and then go to Alabama and Mississippi to "help the colored people."[555]

One young woman remarked that she would "give the Negroes better jobs." A boy the same age envisioned that he would "see that Negroes have the same rights." McCarthy Eanes spoke of speeding up the process of integration. An Ely Street boy perpetually engaged in brick-throwing battles with white youngsters stated that he would "open these schools, let the colored go in stores and buy what they please, and do something about these teenagers throwing bricks from cars." A fourteen year old with diverse interests said he would focus on civil rights and race relations, but would also work for peace with Russia and cut the space program. He described himself as leery of "trying to overpower God's world."[556]

Samuel Walker expressed significant ambivalence toward the United States, commenting that "there is nothing wrong with the country, just the people in it."

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[555] Number 52, ibid; Number 3, ibid; Number 4, ibid.

[556] Number 6, ibid; Number 16, ibid; Number 12, ibid; Number 19, ibid; Number 20, ibid.

Nonetheless, if schools did not reopen in the fall, he planned to join the United States Army. Many of the other boys also expressed a willingness to defend their country even if, as one sixteen year old put it, "Negroes don't get as much as citizens." Bessie Reed scorned this attitude, questioning why blacks did not simply refuse to fight for a nation that abused them. Ronald Ward, the only active duty military person [Navy] interviewed, commented that he and his black shipmates often debated their reasons for serving Uncle Sam, noting that blacks enjoyed more freedom in Cuba than at home. If he were to die, Ward reflected, he would be "dying for the white man" and "not defending nothing." In contrast to Samuel Walker, Oland Smith thoroughly rejected his native land, noting that, "I would rather be in space than down here with all this junk."[557]

Frances Hayes, on the other hand, embraced her identity as an American, rhapsodizing – seemingly without irony – that, "As they say, we have freedom. America is what you make of it. America is what people do to make the best of the situation." A younger boy echoed these sentiments, noting that he liked being an American because, "I guess I've gotten as much here as I would have anywhere else." One girl offered the interesting reflection that she was proud to be an American because when she thought of the United States, she "did not think of the South so much." Another commented that she felt as American as anyone else, but did not "get as much out of it."[558]

One girl ventured the annoyed opinion that if the President could put one man into the University of Mississippi, surely he could do something about Prince Edward County. A sixteen year old placement student noted that, "you would think the government would

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[557] Number 1, ibid; Number 16, ibid; Number 29, ibid; Number 34, ibid; Number 47, ibid.

[558] Number 11, ibid; Number 20, ibid; Number 18, ibid; Number 49, ibid.

do more: this is a wonderful place for communism or the Black Muslims to come in." She questioned why the federal government could not simply enter the county, with troops if necessary, and open the schools. A politically savvy fifteen year old boy who boarded outside Prince Edward for three years stated that America should get itself straightened out in Mississippi before going into Cuba. Arguing that "the U.S. gets involved in everything that goes on." he condemned the federal government's level of involvement in the affairs of the rest of the world.[559]

The Collapse of Street Protest

The vast majority of Turner's interviewees fully supported the demonstrations, but a few offered some concerns or complaints. A sixteen year old who lived outside the county for two years possessed her parents' permission to participate so long as the actions remained well-organized. As conditions for her participation, she herself insisted that the demonstration "have a purpose," that the leaders possess experience in civil rights protest, and that other participants genuinely commit themselves to the cause of freedom and agree to maintain a cooperative demeanor. She offered a harsh evaluation of her fellow protesters, charging that nearly half of the participants did not pay attention in the nonviolence workshops. Two other teenagers entertained some concerns regarding focus – one worried that more attention should be paid to jobs and less to lunch counters, and the other that demonstration at privately owned businesses unlikely to receive much black patronage was unnecessary and counterproductive.[560]

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[559] Number 28, ibid; Number 42, ibid; Number 30, ibid.

Most whites, on the other hand, viewed the agitation in the streets with horror and disgust. Embittered by the use of economic warfare, which affected businessmen who called for the reopening of the schools as well as those maintaining a stalwart commitment to segregation, they condemned street protest as uncivil, undignified, and threatening. Many predicted a riot. At the June 17 Board of Supervisors meeting, county officials recommended forty-nine men for appointment as part-time deputy sheriffs – in a county employing four men in the sheriff's office: three deputies and Sheriff James Clark. Officials added eighteen more in July and an additional ten in August. At Sheriff Clark's request, the Board also approved the appointment of George Ferguson and P.F. Gay as full-time deputies for July and August, later extending Gay's appointment through September.[561]

Aware that the State Compensation Board might not approve all their nominees, the Supervisors approved Clark's request that the local governing body pay those not approved if their use ever became necessary. Clark made regular use of his expanded force, and by the beginning of August, the Supervisors owed forty-seven deputies amounts ranging from $1.85 to $36.43. At its September 3rd meeting, the Board approved payment of $736.27 to fifty-four of Clark's men. On October 1, the sheriff's office submitted another claim requesting $241.10 to pay twenty men. Even after the summer and the demonstrations came to a close, some of the deputies remained on the payroll. As late as April 1964, Clark requested money to pay twelve part-time deputies. As members of the enormous police force patrolled the tense streets of Farmville

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[560] Number 36, ibid; Number 37, ibid; Number 38, ibid.
[561] Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 17 June 1963, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse; ibid, July 1963; ibid, 6 August 1963; ibid, 3 September 1963.

throughout the hot days of July and August, many marched beside large dogs. Despite her extensive experience in Mississippi, commonly viewed as the movement's epicenter of police violence, Jean Fairfax commented that "it was the first time I ever saw dogs…In all the time I spent working across the South, this was the first time I came up close to dogs."[562]

When the Prince Edward County Free School Association opened on September 16th, the demonstrations and selective buying campaign ground to a halt. The vast majority of the participating teenagers returned to school and older people did not fill their places on the lines. In October, the Farmville Town Council approved a new ordinance requiring persons planning to picket on town sidewalks to state their reasons for demonstration before being granted a parade permit. Viewing this as an outright effort to intimidate black protesters, Griffin immediately sent Mayor Watkins a letter protesting this attempt to "discourage adult participation in demonstrations and peaceful picketing." At the Council's next meeting, the minister presented a 150-signature petition requesting relief from discriminatory practices. Threatening that "continued procrastination on the part of political and business leaders will inevitably result in the Negro community resuming demonstrations which will be a strain on the meager resources of our community," he laid out five demands. Most importantly, the establishment of interracial committee oriented toward furthering "democratic change" and the enactment of a public accommodations law. Petitioners also demanded the appointment of blacks to positions in municipal government above the janitorial level and employment by local businesses and industries of qualified persons solely upon the basis

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[562] Ibid, 6 August 1963; ibid, 3 September 1963; ibid, 1 October 1963; ibid, 7 April 1964; Jean Fairfax interview, transcript, p. 19.

of ability and training. Finally, they insisted upon the earmarking of a larger portion of tax revenue for improving black residential areas.[563]

Watkins protested that town officials, whom, he stated, "have no authority to dictate to business on their employment policies," could not meet the majority of these demands. On the matter of distribution of revenue, clearly a town government issue, he maintained that local officials had always allocated funds in the best interest of town residents without regard to race. When confronted at the November meeting, the mayor requested a statement spelling out the practices deemed offensive by the black community. Griffin agreed to submit such a document before the next council meeting; when he did not, officials expunged the petition from the official minutes without taking any action on the issues raised.[564]

The moment for additional demonstrations passed – possibly because Griffin intended his threat as a bluff and possibly because with the children back in school, the most immediate problem fueling the pickets achieved a temporary solution. Attention shifted back toward the courtroom, where on March 30, 1964, the Supreme Court of the United States once again heard the case from Prince Edward. Originally known as *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, lawyers re-filed it as *Allen v. County School Board* when Dorothy Davis passed beyond school age. When the second plaintiff

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[563] "Prince Edward NAACP Gives Farmville Mayor Request List," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 October 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; "Farmville Negroes' Petition Asks End of Discrimination," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 November 1963, ibid; "Mayor Receives NAACP Demands," *Farmville Herald*, 25 October 1963.

[564] "Mayor Receives NAACP Demands," *Farmville Herald*, 25 October 1963; ; "Farmville Negroes' Petition Asks End of Discrimination," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 November 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

also aged beyond the case, they filed a third time, as *Griffin v. County School Board.* The final plaintiff in the school closings case constituted none other than Leslie Francis (Skippy) Griffin, Jr., teenage activist and oldest son of the "fighting preacher." While the lawyers prepared the case for argument before the high court, Skippy Griffin himself, like the other demonstrations leaders, returned to school in the county under the auspices of the Prince Edward County Free Schools.

CHAPTER 7

WASHINGTON, D.C. MEETS FARMVILLE: 1963-64

In a speech at Kentucky's centennial observance of the Emancipation Proclamation, held in Louisville in March 1963, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy noted:

> We may observe with much sadness and irony that, outside of Africa, south of the Sahara, where education is still a difficult challenge, the only places on earth known not to provide free public education are Communist China, North Vietnam, Sarawak, Singapore, British Honduras – and Prince Edward County, Virginia.[565]

Kennedy's hard-won acknowledgement of the gravity of the situation in Prince Edward constituted one of the few public federal admissions of the existence of a constitutional crisis in Southside Virginia. Overshadowed by the more high-profile stories of terrorism, vigilante law, and physical brutality emerging from the South, the Prince Edward school closings received little attention from the Kennedy Administration. Aside from an unsuccessful Justice Department attempt to intervene in the case in April 1961, the federal government adopted a hands-off approach to Prince Edward, counseling patience, restraint, and faith in the judicial system.

Pointing to the limits of federal jurisdiction over education, officials continually reiterated the dictates of federalism, insisting that municipal authorities and the Virginia state government resolve the situation themselves. A few scattered individuals in the Justice Department, namely Attorney General Kennedy and Assistant Attorney General

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[565] Qtd. in Dean Duncan, "RFK Says Nation Turns Race Corner," *The Courier-Journal*, 19 March 1963.

for Civil Rights Burke Marshall, exhibited sincere concern over the state of affairs in the county, but their "crisis management" approach to civil rights repeatedly diverted their attention to the series of violent racial crises exploding across the Deep South. Members of the Civil Rights Commission viewed the situation with sympathy and interest, but locked in a struggle for the Commission's very life against reactionary forces in Congress, they possessed little money and/or time to involve themselves in Prince Edward's struggle. Some officials in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) condemned the closings, but unable to envision a role for the department in constructing a solution, took no action.

Finally, however, in the summer of 1963, pressured by tenacious American Friends Service Committee and NAACP lobbying campaigns, federal officials threw their political muscle into cobbling together a program to aid the crisis's most vulnerable victims: the locked-out children. With the President's support, Attorney General Kennedy leveraged the Justice Department's influence to establish a federally-initiated, state-sponsored, privately-funded temporary school system known as the Prince Edward County Free School Association (PEFSA.) Though closely identified with the Kennedy brothers, the Free Schools relied upon private foundations and sympathetic citizens for their financial solvency and Virginia politicians for their political/bureaucratic survival. The impetus of the political will to act that birthed the school system, however, lay in AFSC and NAACP lobbyists' tireless attempts to keep the situation ever before federal eyes.

Throughout 1962 and 1963, AFSC staff members undertook a coordinated campaign to encourage federal intervention in the county, namely in the form of a

massive remedial education project. Making the rounds of every federal agency even marginally connected to the issues at stake in Prince Edward, they employed the extensive network of Quaker contacts to engineer access to leading government officials, coordinated summit meetings, and emphasized the particular plight of the older youth, whose likelihood of ever returning to the classroom decreased daily. In partnership with the NAACP, they coordinated a petition for intervention to President Kennedy and utilized their extensive knowledge of the specifics of the local situation to develop several detailed program proposals.

Too many contemporary sources portray the organization of the Free School Association as a solely humanitarian response to the tragedy, prompted by conscience alone.[566] Though humanitarian motives and a genuine desire to alleviate the suffering of nearly 2000 innocent children certainly played a role in the equation, the formation of the Free Schools served intensely political purposes as well. The incessant pressure from AFSC and NAACP representatives created a climate of receptivity among many federal officials, as well as a recognition that, the dictates of federalism aside, the United States government could not continue to stand idly by, bemoaning the situation. As civil rights demonstrations swept the nation (and Farmville) that momentous summer, tempers

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[566] See Sullivan, *Bound for Freedom*; William Vanden Heuvel and Neil V. Sullivan, "The Prince Edward County Situation," *NEA Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (March 1964): 12-15; R.C. Smith, "County's Crippled Generation," *Southern Education Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July/August 1966): 13-16; Susan Jacoby, "Prince Edward County: Back Where They Started," *Washington Post POTOMAC* (24 March 1968): 22-23, 27-28, 31; and John Egerton, "A Gentlemen's Fight," *American Heritage*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (August/September 1979): 56-65.

flared, tensions rose, and "biding time" lost all credibility.[567] Indications that another year without schools might cause bloodshed crystallized the decision to act and the Free Schools subsequently opened their doors on September 16, 1963. Though not public schools, they offered tuition-free education to any child interested in attending. Approximately 1560 students, including eight whites, took advantage of the opportunity.

For many attendees, the community-oriented school successfully smoothed the transition back into the classroom through its cutting-edge pedagogy, well-trained staff, and nongraded approach to grouping. The single greatest federal contribution to the crisis, the Free Schools should rightly be considered a direct legacy of AFSC and NAACP lobbying efforts. Though they differed in many ways from the proposals developed by the AFSC and shied away from overt affiliation with the cause of civil rights, the Free Schools provided Prince Edward children the most comprehensive educational relief program of the crisis years. The impact of the venture shook some of the highest federal circles as well.

Robert F. Kennedy, the project's chief sponsor – once termed "the Administration's leading in-house proponent of strong civil rights legislation" – noted in 1965 that:

> The Free Schools did not make up for the years of educational opportunity that had been lost, but they did stop the human erosion, and in the process served as a pilot project for the nation in showing what remarkable progress could be made with disadvantaged children if excellent teachers, modern techniques, and adequate funds were available. In an important sense, the Free Schools provided

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[567] The massive demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama in April and May of 1963 provided the impetus for President John F. Kennedy's decision to push for the adoption of the Civil Rights Bill and sparked a summer of civil rights protest across the nation. See Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981).

> the experience that justified the war against poverty as enacted in the Economic Opportunity program.[568]

No direct links exist between the 1963-64 undertaking in Prince Edward and the subsequent Office of Economic Opportunity programs - known collectively as the War on Poverty. Nevertheless, the Free Schools embodied a commitment to "leveling the playing field" and providing social/medical services through education that later found fuller expression in the Head Start program. The optimism generated among those who witnessed the children's academic and social progress no doubt strengthened their commitment to the emerging antipoverty campaign and conviction that tools such as "excellent teachers, modern techniques and adequate funding" could truly eradicate poverty in America. As a successful experiment in community-focused education, the Free Schools presaged the Great Society, but ironically, when full-fledged War on Poverty programs came to the county two years later, they proved a great disappointment to black residents.

Setting the Stage for Federal Intervention

The first federal attempt to intervene in Prince Edward County came in April 1961, when the Justice Department filed a motion to intervene as a plaintiff in the suit. Filing before Judge Lewis in Richmond, Attorney General Kennedy noted that "court orders are being circumvented and nullified. Therefore, we have brought this action to protect the integrity of the judicial process of the United States." The Justice Department motion requested the court to enjoin county and state officials from failing to maintain a public school system, from using public funds to support the Foundation schools, and

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[568] Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 441; Robert F. Kennedy, introduction to Sullivan, *Bound for Freedom*, p. x.

from appropriating public funds for the support of any public schools in the state so long as the Prince Edward schools remain closed. Kennedy's motion named the existing defendants - the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors, the Prince Edward County School Board, the Virginia State Board of Education, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction – and added the Prince Edward School Foundation, the state of Virginia. and the state comptroller to the list. It zeroed in upon the Supervisors' decision to raise taxes at the beginning of the 1960 school year and subsequently reimburse parents $100 of their tuition fees. "The maintenance and operation of the schools of the Prince Edward School Foundation on a racially discriminatory basis, with the financial assistance of the county and state," argued the motion, "circumvents this court's order requiring the public schools of Prince Edward County to be operated without racial discrimination."[569]

Though the Justice Department previously entered a Louisiana case as an active *amicus curiae*, its motion to intervene as a plaintiff in a school segregation case lacked precedent. Roy Wilkins embraced the move, commenting that, "They [Prince Edward whites] are learning the hard way, but one of these days some sections of our country will understand that they are in the United States and are not operating separate fiefs." The court heard the government's request on May 8th and issued a denial June 14th. However, it did allow the original plaintiffs' supplemental complaint, requesting an injunction against the use of tax credits and public funds for the support of any private school practicing racial discrimination, to proceed. Though Kennedy's action did not succeed in provoking any action, it did polarize the Virginia Democratic primary, which pitted

[569] Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice, 26 April 1961, NAACP Papers, Part III, Series D, Reel 9.

Lindsay Almond's Attorney General, Albertis Harrison, against Lieutenant Governor A.E.S. Stephens. Though both affiliated with Byrd, Stephens, a supporter of JFK, held considerably more liberal views. Although Harrison publicly stated a desire to see the schools reopened, he insisted that state government held no jurisdiction over municipal affairs. Stephens, who favored the resumption of public education and indicated a willingness to define executive power more broadly, experienced a trouncing at the polls. Voices in the state's pro-public education campaign considered Kennedy's action well-intentioned, but poorly timed, charging that its punitive measures worked against the "moderate" cause.[570]

After this rebuff by the federal courts, Washington took little further action for the next year. The suit continued along its tortuous course through the judicial system. In November 1962, attorneys for the plaintiffs appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court. Bemoaning the lack of teeth in Lewis's July order maintaining that Prince Edward could not, under the Fourteenth Amendment, close its schools while others in the Commonwealth remained open, they noted that the continued defiance of county and state officials might warrant the invocation of contempt powers. Furthermore, they argued that in the absence of a prompt assurance that schools would open by February 1st,

[570] Ibid; Press Release, NAACP, 26 April 1961, ibid; NAACP, "Background Information on the Prince Edward County, Virginia, School Desegregation Case," 1961, ibid; W. Lester Banks, Executive Secretary, Virginia State Conference, to Roy Wilkins, "History of the Prince Edward School Desegregation Case," n.d., ibid; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 191-192.

the court should enjoin the State Board of Education from approving payment of state funds for the support of public schools anywhere in Virginia.[571]

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From 1961 to 1963, AFSC's Jean Fairfax haunted the halls of DC federal buildings on behalf of the children of Prince Edward County. She lobbied individuals in the Office of Education, Department of Agriculture, the National Institute of Health, the Children's Bureau, and the Social Security Office. She also pursued members of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and met with the leadership of the National Education Association (NEA). Fairfax repeatedly approached Gerald Hoffman of USDA Extension Services with a proposal to conduct a basic literacy program for illiterate seven to ten year olds under the umbrella of the 4-H program. Tying the situation to the larger goals of the department, she argued that "the basic objectives of your 4-H program and your broader goals for the improvement of rural life are certainly being jeopardized by the closing of the public schools."[572]

In a series of letters and meetings with Commission of Education Sterling McMurrin, she laid out a spectrum of ways for HEW to act in support of the children, proposing three different courses of action, all but one of which officials rejected as impossible. Her first suggestion involved transporting all desiring children to a nearby federal facility such as Camp Pickett and conducting an emergency educational project

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[571] Harry Boyte, "The Prince Edward Story," January 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38552, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives, p. 15-16.

[572] Fairfax to Gerald Hoffman, Deputy Administrator, Extension Service, Department of Agriculture, 14 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38215, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

under the auspices of the federal government. McMurrin countered this suggestion with the rejoinder that education's status as a state responsibility bars the federal government from providing any direct educational services unless specifically authorized by the U.S. Congress. "Acts of Congress make consultative services and grants available to help the states meet their responsibilities," he wrote Fairfax in August 1961. "These laws do not, however, authorize federal agencies to operate projects in local communities independent of state and local programs." HEW Assistant Secretary James Quigley took a similar line with Burke Marshall, explaining that "the basic obstacle in the way of efforts by this Department to provide education for Prince Edward County children is that we have no program for the support of general education."[573]

Fairfax also proposed that HEW take the lead in convening a meeting of representatives of all federal agencies with a presence in Prince Edward County, for the purpose of discussing a more intensive federal role in the county. McMurrin vetoed this as well, commenting that the federal-state relationship limited the reach of other agencies as much as his own, and that such a meeting could accomplish little beyond mutual commiseration. In the event of a reopening, however, McMurrin did pledge departmental assistance in securing teachers, evaluating children, and providing workshops for teachers and parents. The tone of his replies to Fairfax suggests that he personally wished to be more helpful, but felt trapped by the restraining cords of federal-state jurisdiction. Undaunted, Fairfax pressed on. Since McMurrin refused to take the lead in coordinating

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[573] Fairfax to Sterling McMurrin, 12 July 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38180, ibid; McMurrin to Fairfax, 10 August 1961, ibid; James Quigley to Burke Marshall, 18 March 1963, Box 1, Folder 10, Series I: Board of Trustees Minutes, Correspondence and Governance, 1963-1967, Prince Edward Free School Association Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, VSU.

meetings of representatives from relevant agencies, she assumed the responsibility herself.[574]

Often serving as a go-between for different agencies and departments, her persistence opened new channels of communication, brought diverse agencies and individuals together for unprecedented brainstorming sessions, and generally raised awareness of the situation among federal officials. Whenever beneficial, she seized the opportunity to relay messages – such as letting Burke Marshall know that despite McMurrin's hesitation to approve any intervention on part of his office, he would not turn down a request for assistance from the Justice Department or the courts. In June 1963, she persuaded McMurrin's successor, Francis Keppel, to convene a meeting with Burke Marshall, the Civil Rights Commission staff, and representatives of the National Institute of Mental Health and the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime to discuss potential remedial education programs for the children of the county. At her insistence, organizers extended supplementary invitations to John Morsell of the NAACP, Heslip Lee of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, Leslie Dunbar of the Southern Regional Council, Harold Fleming of the Potomac Institute (formerly of the SRC), and local leaders L. Francis Griffin and C.G.G. Moss.[575]

Making the most of a contact with the Civil Rights Commission's Peter Libassi, Fairfax penetrated into the group's inner circles. Libassi, a veteran of an AFSC Interns-in-Industry (fair employment) project, provided a valuable contact – he and his

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[574] Fairfax to Sterling McMurrin, 12 July 1961, 1961 Box 2, Folder 38180, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; McMurrin to Fairfax, 10 August 1961, ibid.

[575] Fairfax to Burke Marshall, 8 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38213, ibid; Fairfax to Leslie Griffin, G.G. Gordon Moss, Heslip Lee, John Morsell, Leslie Dunbar, and Harold Fleming, 3 June 1963, NAACP Papers, Part 24, Series B, Reel 27.

supervisor William Taylor worked closely with Kennedy aide Lee White. Profoundly impacted by his experience with Interns-in-Industry, he embraced the opportunity to offer assistance. Libassi convened a meeting with Taylor, Assistant Director for State Advisory Committees Peter Sussman, and Elizabeth Cole of the Education Division for the purpose of weighing the merits of a full Commission hearing versus a study by the Virginia State Advisory Committee. Fairfax herself campaigned for an official hearing. Several months earlier, she encouraged CRC Staff Director Berl Bernhard to embrace this course of action, commenting that "the full story of what has happened...will be available only to a body which has the power to subpoena witnesses and which has the perspective of concern for the total civil rights picture." Fairfax insisted that the publicity surrounding a hearing could bring out details about the PESF that would nurture growing white disquiet with the system and deter some of the other communities who looked to Prince Edward's private school system as a model for their own efforts.[576]

Taylor, Sussman, and Cole, on the other hand, possessed greater enthusiasm for the study route, envisioning a report that would focus upon what had happened to the county's black children and teachers, the quality of education received by the white students, drop-out rates among whites, professional concerns of white teachers, and the impact of closing schools upon state and federal services to children and youth (including ADC, school lunch programs, and 4-H clubs). They suggested several qualified individuals for the investigative role. Though previously leaning toward releasing Bill Bagwell from his duties for several months to allow him to take on the job, AFSC

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[576] Fairfax to Moffett, 20 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38216, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Fairfax to Berl Bernhard, 14 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38213, ibid.

accepted Harold Fleming's recommendation to encourage the Virginia State Advisory Committee to hire an independent researcher.[577]

Advisory Committee members soon imbibed Fleming's optimism that a freelance writer could more easily obtain closely guarded information than a person so closely identified with the cause of the black community. Ultimately, the Committee commissioned sociologists J. Kenneth Morland of Randolph-Macon Women's College and Ed Peeples of the Medical College of Virginia to write the report. As primary researcher, Peeples returned to Prince Edward County in the summer of 1963 to build upon the field work amassed for his recently-completed masters' thesis, "A Perspective on the Prince Edward County School Issue." As a descendant of a prominent Southside family – the Prince George County Peebles' (founders of Peebles Department Store) – his name opened doors with powerful whites, contributing to his reputation as an interviewer uniquely skilled in extracting valuable information from white contacts. Assuming him to be one of their own, many of his segregationist interviewees spoke freely, revealing plans and details they might have kept to themselves had they known his politics.[578]

Kenneth Morland polished and expanded Peeples' rough draft, submitting the team's final report to the Commission in January 1964. Staff members and commissioners alike initially applauded the sociologists' work, moving rapidly toward the publication process that all involved considered an essential component of marshalling the public support necessary to force a reopening of the schools. In early

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[577] Ibid.

[578] Fairfax to Moffett, 20 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38216, ibid; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 8, 20; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 8, 20.

spring, however, progress ground to a sudden halt. Upon questioning the stalemate, Peeples learned that Harry Byrd and other powerful members of the southern Congressional bloc considered the report too explosive for publication. Sources at the Commission admitted that Byrd, Georgia senator Richard Russell, and other leading lights of southern conservatism "told them that if they dared publish it, that'd be the end of the Commission." Vowing to increase the already dangerously powerful southern and conservative opposition to the civil rights bill then under Congressional consideration if Commission members proceeded with publication, Byrd's group threatened to scrap the Commission entirely and block the forthcoming Civil Rights Act of 1964.[579]

Morland wrote Peeples on January 31 that Commission leaders "think that Southern Congressmen are just looking for things to criticize the Commission for, especially since the forthcoming battle over the civil rights bill involves the provision of making the Commission a permanent agency." Staff and commissioners consequently suppressed the report, Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law in July 1964 after a bitter congressional fight and an extensive southern filibuster in the Senate, and the most complete account to date of the massive miscarriage of justice in Prince Edward County simply disappeared. Discouraged and frustrated by Byrd's continued success at keeping Prince Edward County out of the national spotlight, Peeples nevertheless consoled himself with the thought that the sacrifice of his report had helped secure the passage of one of the era's most important pieces of legislation. As he commented in a 2006 interview:

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[579] Ibid, p. 21-22.

> In my imagined life, I said to myself, "Ed, you did good...You created a product that made it possible for Ken Morland to create a product that was sacrificed on the altar to create the Civil Rights Act of '64 and to allow the Commission to survive"...It's good enough for me 'til I go down and die knowing that maybe it had something to do with it, that at least we created something so scary to them that they had to let go of something scary to them.[580]

Spottswood Robinson, the bookish Richmond lawyer who first took on the *Davis* case in 1951 and served as chief legal council for the NAACP in Virginia until 1960, was more inclined to favor a hearing. The Dean of Howard University Law School, Robinson held appointed membership status on the Commission. Though he cautioned Fairfax not to overestimate the effectiveness of subpoena power or the reliability of witnesses, he did agree to talk with other Commission members about planning a hearing. He also supported the idea of a report by the State Advisory Committee, suggesting that the two need not be mutually exclusive. Like other members of the Commission, Robinson assured Fairfax that time constraints constituted the only factor mitigating against a Prince Edward investigation. Waiting on congressional action to extend the Commission's life beyond its expiration date of summer 1963, staff members toiled under considerable pressure to finish all previously approved projects by August, leaving them little time to take on new undertakings.[581]

In a 2005 interview, Fairfax noted that:

> I was deeply aware that there were people at very high levels of government who were personally committed to resolving civil rights issues. I was also aware that

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[580] Ibid; Edward H. Peeples, "Special Note to the Contemporary Reader: The Tragedy of Closed Public Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia: A Report for the Virginia Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights," January 2004, "Separate But Not Equal" Collection, VCU.

[581] Fairfax to Moffett, 20 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38216, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

> they were operating within a climate in Congress that was very adverse to doing anything that would restructure race relations.

In her experience, the greatest obstacle to federal support for civil rights causes lay in the control of congressional purse strings by the southern conservatives who chaired the major House committees. During every trip to Washington, Fairfax visited officials who repeatedly subordinated their personal support for her agenda to their conviction that something could not be done, or at the very least, could not be done in the way she proposed because the funds would be removed in committee. As she later commented, these obstacles ultimately "made the role of the black community and the black community's allies and advocates in the white community very critical in pushing the envelope. I think we need to be very grateful for the fact that people did not wait for the political climate to emerge," she noted, but rather went ahead and acted, forcing the government to respond.[582]

Nonetheless, the very breadth of the AFSC network opened doors that improved the odds of lobbying success. Many of the officials who met with Fairfax had some involvement – or employment – with the AFSC in their past, or at the very least held the organization in high regard. "They know that when we speak truth to power, we're not inventing things and we're prepared to document whatever charges we make," she commented. "They may think we're a nuisance, but a nuisance that has to exist in order to make the government work."[583]

By the fall of 1962, all of the relevant groups – PECCA, NAACP, AFSC, and the legal team – agreed that a direct petition to President Kennedy from Prince Edward's

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[582] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 23-24.

[583] Ibid.

black residents could prove instrumental in encouraging the chief executive to use his discretionary powers. AFSC staff members drew up working drafts and advised L.F. Griffin on the mechanics of preparing a petition. The final draft, presented to Kennedy on May 15 with 695 signatures, bore great similarity to the AFSC draft. It opened with a brief description of the background to the crisis and a quick rundown of the dismal details: adolescents on the verge of entering adult life without any skills, ten year olds unable to read or write, etc. Next came the request: a survey of the size and nature of the educational problems involved in reestablishing public schools, a comprehensive remedial program to assist the children in transitioning back to school, and a specially designed project aimed at encouraging the older youth to return. The petition closed by situating the problem in global context. "We know that our country has sent specialists to distant lands to help distressed people," it noted. "The children of Prince Edward County need a program which will match in purpose, scope and quality the best social and technical assistance project which our government has ever done anywhere in the world."[584]

Believing that the NAACP's well-established lobbying arm, the Washington Bureau, provided the organization better leverage to exert pressure in Washington in support of the petition, AFSC voluntarily stepped into the background. Staff members did, however, continue to urge NAACP lobbyists to involve other civil rights groups and caution against providing the Virginia Teachers Association too much power in the

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[584] Fairfax to L.F. Griffin, 29 October 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38216, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Petition to John Fitzgerald Kennedy, October 1962, ibid; "NAACP Seeking Federal Help For Prince Edward Students," NAACP Papers, Part 27, Series A, Reel 19; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools,* p. 237.

coalition. Virginia State Conference leaders insisted that VTA leadership play a leading role in any plans concerning educational programs. AFSC staff members, however, in the wake of the organization's negative response to the Southern College Educational Project, worried that Executive Secretary Picott would have difficulty respecting the opinions and agendas of other groups. In the wake of the submission of the petition, Assistant to the Executive Secretary John Morsell called upon the federal government on April 11th to "mobilize its full resources to set up a massive remedial instruction program for Prince Edward County Negro children."[585]

Under NAACP direction, nearly one hundred black students from Virginia Union University and Hampton Institute traveled to Prince Edward that spring to conduct the extensive survey of residents' educational needs that petitioners had requested the federal government to sponsor. While there, they engaged in some direct action work as well, effectively launching the summer demonstrations with their sit-ins at J.J. Newberry's, Southside Sundry, Owen-Sanford Drug Store, the State Theater, and the College Shoppe. Fearful that the Kennedy administration would refuse to fund the requested survey, NAACP officials commissioned their own, vowing to turn the results over to the federal government to assist with the development of the remedial program. Surprisingly, the Office of Education awarded a $75,000 grant to Michigan State University in May to finance a study of the effects of closed schools upon the educational and behavioral development of youth. Under the direction of Dr. Robert Lee Green, an African

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[585] Fairfax to Tartt Bell, Barbara Moffett and William Bagwell, 22 January 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38549, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "Massive U.S. Remedial Program Urged in Prince Edward County," *Washington Post*, 11 April 1963, clipping, ibid.

American professor of education, the Michigan State team inserted itself into county life.[586]

Morsell's prediction that an emergency assistance program could be constructed under presidential directive without requiring congressional action proved prescient. When federal planning for the Free Schools began in earnest that summer, aware that the program would probably go down to defeat in a congressional vote, organizers worked solely through Executive channels. Nevertheless, observers such as Fairfax noted what they considered a disproportional emphasis on public relations, writing in June 1963 that:

> I shuttle between being annoyed and highly amused at HEW. Their main worry apparently is that NAACP will jump on them, so they are flapping around to find something – anything – to offer as an appeasement...I wish they were as concerned about the Prince Edward County kids as they are about public relations.[587]

Such words provided an accurate indictment of much federal involvement in the movement. Too little, too late, too calculated, and too constrained, federal assistance often tamped down crises rather than actually defusing them. The limits of federalism, even in the hands of sympathetic officials, created tangled jurisdictional problems that privileged a state's right to abstain from action over the federal government's right to intervene. Ultimately, however, federalism provided an acceptable excuse for politically convenient inaction. As historian Michal Belknap points out, the Kennedy administration's approach to civil rights produced some significant victories, but failed to protect those far from the "great battlefields" of Birmingham, Selma, and Oxford,

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[586] "Massive U.S. Remedial Program Urged in Prince Edward County," *Washington Post*, 11 April 1963, clipping, ibid; Smith, *They Closed Their Schools*, p. 237.

[587] Fairfax to Moffett, 25 June 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38545, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Mississippi. "They too needed protection," notes Belknap. "From the crisis managers of the Kennedy administration they received only noble words about federalism."[588]

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The bulk of the planning for the Free Schools took place in Justice Department offices. When it became obvious that the courts would not order a reopening of the public schools by September 1963, President Kennedy authorized the Attorney General to develop a plan for providing interim schools. Robert F. Kennedy turned to William Vanden Heuvel, president of the International Rescue Committee, a refugee aid society and a former Democratic candidate for the House of Representatives from the state of New York. Appointing Vanden Heuvel his Special Assistant, Kennedy detached him from liberal Republican Senator Jacob Javits' law firm and charged him with creating a workable plan to operate and finance a one-year free school system in Prince Edward County.[589]

For two months, Vanden Heuvel twisted arms, concentrating much of his energy upon Virginia governor Albertis Harrison and other influential members of the state's political establishment. "Happy" Lee, Executive Secretary of the Virginia Council on Human Relations, noted that Vanden Heuvel's negotiations kept each group separate – the NAACP in one room, the Governor's staff in another, and the Prince Edward people in still another – while the Special Assistant himself shuttled back and forth with proposals and demands. At no time in the process, according to Lee, did African

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[588] Michal R. Belknap, *Federal Law and Southern Order: Racial Violence and Constitutional Conflict in the Post-Brown South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), p. 105.

[589] Colgate Darden, Statement, n.d., Box 3, Folder 8, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sullivan, p. 31-32; Navasky, p. 182.

Americans and white Virginians come face to face. A real sense of urgency imbued Vanden Heuvel's efforts. As he told Free School superintendent Neil Sullivan in their first meeting:

> I knew I had to come up with a plan after spending only a few days in Farmville. The community was – and still is – boiling. Demonstrations have been continuous…and some people are even predicting bloodshed if the schools aren't reopened.

Vanden Heuvel's plan, which called for an open system financed by grants from large foundations and donations from sympathetic citizens, received immediate approval from both the President and the Attorney General. However, he and the Attorney General both recognized that the success of the venture depended in large part upon cultivation of state support. Marshalling the Kennedys' expanding political power, they leaned upon Harrison until he agreed to personally appoint an interracial Board of Trustees comprised of leading Virginia educators.[590]

On August 14, the governor officially announced the formation of the nonprofit Prince Edward Free School Association under the leadership of a Board of Trustees chaired by one of the most respected men in the state: former governor and retired president of the University of Virginia, Colgate Darden. Darden, who served as chief executive from 1942-46, had a reputation as a racial moderate, a decent man who took seriously the "equal" part of "separate but equal." Though he utilized race-baiting techniques as a part of his 1938 congressional race, he also became one of the first white Virginia politicians to actively court black support. Darden's commitment to segregation propelled him to devote much of his political career to arguing – in the tradition of

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[590] Sullivan, p. 37-38; Nancy Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Douglas Southall Freeman's "Virginia Way" – that separation need not be discriminatory. Urging Virginians to recognize that those holding power often used segregation "as a shield for exploitation and oppression," he was an early supporter of the Southern Regional Council and one of the first chief executives to voluntarily meet with black delegations.[591]

As president of the University of Virginia, Darden accepted limited integration in graduate and professional education as the only practical means of complying with the Supreme Court's rulings in *Gaines v. Canada* and *Sweatt v. Painter*.[592] At the same time, however, he encouraged southern officials to provide meaningful and immediate equalization of facilities and curriculum in order to preserve segregation in elementary and secondary school education. When the NAACP first sued Prince Edward County in 1951, attorneys for the school board brought in Darden as their key witness in the federal court hearings. While deploring the conditions of the county's black schools and agreeing that white officials had an obligation to provide a better educational experience for African American youth, Darden argued that segregation itself did not imply discrimination, insisting that a dual system could be equalized and made to serve the best interests of both races. He resigned from the Southern Regional Council soon after the group committed itself to eradicating segregation. Though opposed to massive

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[591] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 252-253, 286-287.

[592] *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* [305 U.S. 337 (1938)] ordered that states provide professional and graduate programs for black residents in state rather than merely financing their tuition at a school out of state. *Sweatt v. Painter* [339 U.S. 629 (1950)] took this ruling a step further. Deeming a hastily established Texas law school for blacks an insufficient response to *Gaines*, the Supreme Court ordered that these programs be functionally equal to white institutions not only in facilities and personnel, but also in hard-to-measure factors such as alumni prestige, reputation, and tradition.

resistance, he did little to counter its' rise. Nonetheless, the state's beleaguered progressives continued to view the former governor as the only trustworthy member of the political establishment.[593]

Harrison's five other appointees included Vice Chairman Dr. Thomas Henderson, president of Virginia Union University; Secretary-Treasurer Dr. F.D.G. Ribble, retired Dean of the University of Virginia School of Law; Dr. Fred Cole, president of Washington & Lee University; Dr. Robert Daniel, president of Virginia State College; and Dr. Earl McClenney, president of St. Paul's College of Lawrenceville. Darden, Ribble, and Cole were white; Henderson, Daniel, and McClenney African American. All commanded respect within educational circles. Darden, however, constituted the linchpin of the effort – the other presidents agreed to serve only upon the condition that he accept the chairmanship. Rather pessimistic that such a program could succeed, the former governor noted in a letter to a friend that, "I cannot help being apprehensive about the likelihood of the success of the venture," but ultimately agreed to serve.[594]

The Trustees met for the first time on August 17th to discuss Vanden Heuvel's plans for soliciting funds from charitable and educational foundations. The curriculum recommendations developed by the United States Office of Education sported a price tag of one million dollars. Though grants from foundations such as Ford and Field eventually funded the bulk of the budget, Jean Fairfax noted that many of the major

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[593] Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, p. 293-294; Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[594] Sullivan, p.38; William Vanden Heuvel to Brooks Hayes, 15 July 1963, Box 1, Folder 10, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Colgate Darden to Charles Kaufman, 21 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 11, ibid.

foundations at first "really resented the pressure that they got from Vanden Heuvel....the Free School was one of the first occasions when they were really bulldozed by the Kennedy people." The VCHR's "Happy" Lee told Nancy Adams in 1964 that foundation staff members complained of unbelievable pressure from Justice Department officials and John Kennedy himself – commenting that they had had little choice but to invest.[595]

Kennedy, Vanden Heuvel, and their chosen superintendent, Neil V. Sullivan, possessed a deep commitment to the ideal of free public education as the cornerstone of American democracy. As Vanden Heuvel wrote in March 1964, "Free public education means that no child is born a prisoner of any class, that the chains of poverty do not hang forever upon him, and that the opportunities of a free and open society are ours and our children's." Though political constraints often made it difficult to act consistently upon their convictions, all attempted to live a personal commitment to the cause of racial justice and equal opportunity for blacks.[596]

The white Virginians pressured into leading roles in the system did not always share the goal of racial justice and equal opportunity. After appointing the board, Harrison distanced himself from the effort. At the trustees' first meeting, he charged members to remember "that the purpose of the Prince Edward Free School Association is not to deal with problems of segregation and integration. The purpose is to provide a

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[595] Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 17 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 1, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 7. For more on the development of social movement philanthropy, see J. Craig Jenkins and Abigail Halcli, "Grassrooting the System? The Development and Impact of Social Movement Philanthropy, 1953-1990," in *Philanthropic Foundations: New Scholarship, New Possibilities,* ed. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999): 229-256.

[596] William Vanden Heuvel and Neil V. Sullivan, "The Prince Edward County Situation," *NEA Journal*, March 1964: 12-15.

first-class education for children to whom this opportunity has been denied." After reading his statement, he promptly withdrew. Darden, Cole, and Ribble possessed a genuine commitment to public schools and providing educational opportunities for the children, whom they considered deeply wronged. Nevertheless, their significant ties to the white power structure led them to embrace Harrison's vision of the Free Schools as an apolitical institution. Darden and Ribble resented outside criticism of Virginia's racial practices, and the Chairman maintained personal friendships with some of the segregationists responsible for the closings, namely Barrye Wall and Segar Gravatt, the attorney for the Board of Supervisors. The ability to present different faces to different audiences that served him so well in politics smoothed the Free Schools' relationship with segregationist forces but precluded their development into a real force for community change.[597]

Building the System

Board members immediately turned their attention toward securing an experienced, innovative superintendent for the system. Advisors offered several names, but the group ultimately chose Dr. Neil Sullivan. An Irish Catholic Yankee born and bred in New Hampshire, Sullivan held the superintendency of Union Free School District #2 in East Williston, NY, a wealthy Long Island community. Sympathetic to the goals of the civil rights movement, in the year before his selection by the Free School trustees, Sullivan facilitated a discussion with members of the his local Board of Education about

[597] Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 17 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 1, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

possible ways for affluent white suburban districts to share their advantages with struggling inner-city ones. But given the district's 99.9% white population, he had little interaction with African Americans. Ironically, East Williston was the very Long Island community chastised by Helen Baker in 1961 for sending a shipment of textbooks to the Prince Edward training centers while waging a battle on the home front to keep blacks out of its housing projects.[598]

The reasons for Sullivan's selection derived from curricular factors. Under Sullivan's direction, Union Free School District #2 reinvented itself as a hotbed of cutting edge educational philosophy and practice. Instructors regularly used team teaching and large group/small group instruction techniques. Breaking with the traditional twelve grade structure, the district pioneered a nongraded program allowing students to move through the elementary and high school curriculum at a pace dictated by their own individual abilities. Elementary school students studied foreign languages and the progressive math and science program produced graduates who adjusted easily to college courses. To members of the Free School board, a nongraded approach seemed particularly suited to a student body with no consistent baseline of knowledge. Advisors from the National Education Association concurred. Sullivan, a Roman Catholic whose early years in New Hampshire provided him more firsthand experience with discrimination than most white New Englanders could claim, agreed to accept the post.

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[598] Sullivan, p. 28-30; Helen Baker to Family, 25 January 1961, Helen Baker Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, VSU.

Obtaining a one-year leave from East Williston, he arrived in Farmville barely two weeks before the scheduled start of classes on September 16th. [599]

Early applications for financial support framed investment in the Free Schools as an opportunity to take part in one of the great educational experiments of the modern age. Highlighting the potential to extract a wealth of educational research from the catastrophe, they drew attention to the fact that:

> This situation in Prince Edward County has created natural groups of children at different age levels, but at uniform educational levels...studying the ease or difficulty with which they master various school subjects should throw considerable light upon the role of maturation in the educational process.

School administrators and their consultants, however, tried to avoid treating the pupils as experimental subjects. Consultant Sam Kendrick of the College Examination Board recommended that the first round of educational testing be delayed until January, rightly noting that testing could be a frightening experience and children who had not seen the inside of a classroom in four years, if ever, did not need any additional obstacles in their path.[600]

Relying on the results of testing conducted by Robert Green's Michigan State team the previous summer, trustees and administrators appropriately recognized the situation as dire. The median IQ of the 800 children tested averaged 85.9 for those who had some education since 1959, 69.4 for those who did not. According to the 1937 Stanford-Binet standardization sample used as a baseline by the Michigan State

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[599] Sullivan, p. 27-28, 30-31, 41; Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 17 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 1, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

[600] Darden to John McShain, John McShain Charities, Inc, 9 September 1963, Box 1, Folder 8, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sam Kendrick to Sullivan, 3 October 1963, Box 1, Folder 16, ibid.

researchers, average intelligence ranged from 90-109, placing the majority of the Prince Edward children in the "low average" and "borderline defective" categories. In their final report, Green and his associates noted somberly that:

> Early school deprivation may have irreversible effects. If this is the case, then the rate of subsequent development should be substantially different for children who have experienced severe early deprivation. Terminal skill development of these children would never attain a normal level.

Nevertheless, Free School organizers hoped to prove this prediction unduly pessimistic.[601]

Those connected with the testing rightly noted some adverse impact upon the children's scores caused by the setting for evaluation: crowded, oppressively hot, and poorly ventilated church basements set up to simulate classrooms. Some children waited up to four hours to be tested, circumstances which hardly improved their concentration. Cultural biases implicit in the tests themselves further lowered the scores. When asked to circle the object they used when they got up in the morning and presented with a choice of a toothbrush or a hatchet, many children chose the hatchet. An appropriate answer in their world – many chopped kindling each morning – it nevertheless registered as incorrect when scored. The ultimate damage, however, to the younger children's scores came in the form of simple unfamiliarity with skills such as holding a pencil correctly or basic test taking directions such as "turn the page" or "circle the correct answer." Children who recognized the difference between pictures of ducks and geese found themselves unable to demonstrate that knowledge by circling the similar images, a

[601] Green et al, p. 236, 248, 255-257.

powerful reminder of the role of elementary education in providing basic socialization and life skills.[602]

By mid-November, the treasury received nearly $850,000 of the seemingly enormous $1,000,000 required to maintain operations for a full year. The Ford Foundation came in as the largest single donor with a gift of $250,000. The Field Foundation peppered Darden and Vanden Heuvel with questions about the venture, but ultimately contributed $100,000. The Danforth Foundation, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation each provided $50,000. Grants from smaller foundations totaled an additional $50,000. These foundation funds constituted the first such grants ever issued for the direct support of "public" elementary education.[603]

Through the letter exchange accompanying the grant-making process, foundation heads drew Vanden Heuvel's attention to a slew of editorials criticizing PEFSA attempts to raise money out of state while letting Virginians "off the hook." Concerned that the perception that Virginians refused to support the school system might be harming fund raising efforts, the board procured a list of the largest corporations in the state from the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and sent letters to each requesting donations. They also distributed an appropriately altered letter to private individuals. Ribble sought the governor's active cooperation on the in-state efforts, but Harrison refused on grounds that

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[602] Ibid, p. 91-94; Sullivan, p. 106-108.

[603] Ibid, p. 157-158; Maxwell Hahn, Executive Vice President, Field Foundation, to Colgate Darden, 17 September 1963, Box 1, Folder 13, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

assisting PEFSA would immediately open him up to demands to help the PESF and the state's other private school foundations fill their coffers as well.[604]

Corporate donors, including some of the in-state ones contacted by the board, donated $123,000. The National Education Association began a one dollar fund drive among its membership that resulted in a $71,000 contribution. New York *Herald Tribune* publisher John Hay Whitney sent a check for $10,000. As the story of the Free School Association spread across national media outlets, $40,000 in small donations from private individuals flooded into Vanden Heuvel's PEFSA post office box. A ten year old California boy saved his lunch money for a week and sent it to the Free Schools. An invalid in New York City, daughter of a minister who spent his life serving the rural southern poor, sent $100 from her small savings account "to help in this work."[605]

Donations of books, equipment and supplies valued at $500,000 made the Free Schools among the best equipped in the South, if not the nation as a whole. The Institute of Textbook Publishers donated 40,000 books, while Scott, Foresman & Company sent a dictionary for each student. GE contributed thirty-five large-screen television sets equipped to receive the educational television programming offered by the Central Virginia Educational Television Association in Richmond. Free School teachers used "TV Hour" from 9:00 – 10:00 AM daily, accentuating the program with follow-up lessons. Other donors stocked the audiovisual room with slide projectors and filmstrips. Bell and Howell contributed ten machines that synchronized voice recordings with

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[604] Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 14 September 1963, Box 1, Folder 5, ibid; Minutes, Sixth Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 19 October 1963, ibid.

[605] Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 19 October 1963, ibid; Sullivan, p. 156-157.

corresponding words printed on cards a user could run through the machine at his/her own speed. They proved effective in the remedial reading and speech programs.[606]

The Ethical Culture Society of New York collected books for donation but mistakenly sent them to SNCC's Greenwood, Mississippi project instead, and had to subsequently request Bob Moses to ship them on to Farmville. Sally Byrne, the student council advisor at Milford Senior High School in Milford, New Hampshire, wrote Sullivan in September to express her advisees' desire to help. Noting the limitations of the student council's budget, she proposed a textbook drive, noting that the school possessed physics and chemistry books that could ship immediately. An elderly woman from Indiana sent her most prized possession - her books - noting that, "I want to give them to someone who will find life more wonderful because of them." One of the newly-hired building principals, concerned that the children not enter a bookless building on their first day, drove home to Richmond to bring back her own substantial library of children's books.[607]

Not all of those solicited, however, responded favorably to the invitation to support the Free Schools. Private citizen Lewis Miller returned the fundraising appeal mailed to him with an attached note stating, "It has always been my opinion that if the NAACP, Northern Liberal Do-Gooders, and their like in Virginia had used just a small part of the funds publicizing in all news media as well funds spent in trying to prove a

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[606] Sullivan, p. 156-159, 94; Sullivan, Memo to Administrative Staff, 19 November 1963, Box 18, Folder 1, Series IV: Office of the Superintendent, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

[607] Sullivan, p. 156-159, 94; Julia Sukenik, Ethical Culture Society, to Bob Moses, 5 December 1963, Box 22, Folder 14, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sally Byrne to Sullivan, 3 September 1963, Box 19, Folder 3, Series IV, ibid.

point against States Rights, there would be no need for such a request for support as this." A Dr. Barton in Stonega, clearly hostile toward black education in all forms, returned his copy of the letter with a vituperative postscript reading:

> Why not solicit money from the rich Negros [sic] who support NACP [sic] so wounderfully [sic]?...They want to be better than whites, why don't they prove they are. If Negros [sic] are as good as they say, why don't they go in business and solicit their own color business. Why make white race support them plus their own color. It is time some soft thinkers begin seeing light and let majority have a say so...The Negros [sic] had Africa for 2000 years and they got no civilization started. Not as much as Chinese or Japs. Then to say their mental ability is acute is also soft thinking.[608]

The ties between Chairman Darden and the Prince Edward obstructionists emerged in stark clarity during the fund raising process. Barrye Wall, often greeted as "my dear Barrye" by the former governor, wrote Darden in October to express his congratulations on the Free Schools' success in winning substantial grants and request assistance for the PESF. "We are still in need of financing," he noted. "I would appreciate it if you would give me some information which would aid us in presenting our case – if for no other reason than telling this side of the story." Coolly requesting addresses and contact persons for the Danforth, Field and Babcock Foundations, as well as major Virginia industries that might provide a sympathetic hearing, he assured the chairman of the Free School Association that "any tips you can give us will be appreciated."[609]

A few weeks later, Wall reported that foundation representatives told PESF Administrator Roy Pearson that the prestige of the PEFSA board members constituted the

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[608] Lewis N. Miller, Response to PEFSA Fundraising Letter, 20 December 1963, Box 2, Folder 5, Series I, ibid; Dr. Barton, Response to PEFSA Fundraising Letter. 19 December 1963, ibid.

[609] Wall to Darden, 22 October 1963, Box 1, Folder 18, ibid.

major factor in swinging them behind PEFSA's application. Wall went on to comment that some of the Foundation faithful resented the support received by the Free Schools. Asserting a breathtaking sense of entitlement, he noted that, "A word of recommendation from you and Albertis Harrison in our behalf would be greatly appreciated, and I believe it would shake loose some funds for us which we must have." Despite his occupation as a newspaperman, Wall's worldview accorded little attention to the people who disagreed with him. In many ways, they virtually ceased to exist, as demonstrated in his ironic assertion that "it would make the people in this entire area feel better."[610]

Darden, himself a *Herald* subscriber, promised to do "anything I can to help." Honoring his promise, he praised the Foundation's cause and painted an evocative picture of its financial need to his friend Hollis Edens, former president of Duke University and an active figure in philanthropic circles. In September 1964, Wall sent the former governor a copy of one of segregationists' favorite texts, William A. Massey's *The New Fanatics*, a thirty page booklet published by the National Putnam Letters Committee. As Wall's letters reveal, the PESF stubbornly refused to view the Free School Association as anything other than a typical private school – an institution for blacks to be tolerated so long as it unfroze the flow of tuition grants for whites. The majority of PESF leaders possessed a willingness to see blacks educated so long as they were not asked to pay for it. While they disparagingly referred to the new schools in private as "government schools," many viewed the system as an acceptable fulfillment of the gospel of dual education.[611]

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[610] Wall to Darden, 5 November 1963, Box 2, Folder 2, ibid.

Not once did Foundation leaders acknowledge the new "private" system as a temporary stopgap measure dependent upon funds that could not be renewed. Not once did they recognize that the Free Schools constituted an attempt to staunch the flow of blood from a wound they themselves created. Not once did they admit that the Free Schools were the first comprehensive educational program to touch the majority of black children in the county in four years – or that serving a population denied an education for such a long period of time required far more than the average school budget. In a particularly audacious twist, they instead approached the foundations that had shelled out money to mitigate the effects of their own actions, holding out their hands and crying foul. As Roy Pearson wrote the Danforth Foundation, "We hope that you will kindly make a similar donation to our private school system to the one you made to the other private school system in the county." In their zeal to collect what they considered their fair share, they styled themselves the true martyrs of Prince Edward County: quietly and patiently going about the business of educating children while unfairly denied the glitz and glitter of the Free Schools. Merrimon Cuninggim, the foundation's Executive Director, proved unsympathetic, telling Pearson in no uncertain terms that "believing in the moral rightness of the Supreme Court decision of 1954, the Danforth Foundation does not choose to be a party to any efforts designed to circumvent or delay compliance with that decision."[612]

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[611] Darden to Wall, 11 November 1963, ibid; Darden to Wall, 22 September 1964, Box 3, Folder 3, ibid; Sullivan, p. 194.

[612] Roy Pearson, President, PESF, to Danforth Foundation, 28 October 1963, Box 2, Folder 3, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Merrimon Cuninggim, Executive Director, Danforth Foundation, to Pearson, 1 November 1963, ibid.

Upon learning of Colgate Darden's acceptance of the chairmanship, Segar Gravatt immediately took it upon himself to offer his friend assistance in establishing friendly relations with the county's white leadership. A member of the state's political aristocracy, Gravatt belonged to the cadre of well-heeled, well-educated, fiercely oppositional leaders who first hoisted the banner of massive resistance. A practicing attorney, trial justice, juvenile court judge, and Sunday School teacher, he sat on the University of Virginia Board of Visitors. In 1957, his hometown of Blackstone voted him "Outstanding Citizen of the Year." Unlike many of his cohorts, his ardor for obstructionism did not dim in the wake of the 1959 court rulings, and his work with the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties continued unabated. In taking on the Prince Edward case, he avowed that "not in my lifetime has there been upon the scene in the state of Virginia patriots comparable to the members of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County." A champion of tuition grants and "freedom of choice" – at least for whites – Gravatt considered the NAACP an "enemy of the South," compared the Civil Rights Bill of 1956 to Nazi police commissions, and abhorred token integration and pupil assignment plans. At the height of his influence in 1956, he commented that "we are told that an assignment plan is a course of moderation and of justice. I don't know how you can compromise with evil."[613]

The relationship between Gravatt and Darden was close enough for the former to extend an open invitation to the latter to stay in his home when traveling to Prince

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[613] "Nottoway Judge Wins Blackstone Citizen Award," 25 May 1957, Box 1, "News Clippings 1957-1966" Folder, J. Segar Gravatt Papers, UVA; J. Segar Gravatt, Speech to the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, Charlottesville, 23 July 1956, Box 1, "News Clippings 1954-1956" Folder.

Edward. The image of the defender of the group who closed the schools and the head of the relief effort to mitigate the damages sitting together at the breakfast table is an ironic one indeed. Gravatt repeatedly assured Darden that "the very fine people in the community...will be appreciative of your efforts in the private school enterprise," and encouraged him to rely upon two of the most fervent segregationists and private school men in town for assistance: Editor Wall, and Rat Glenn himself. Cautioning the new chairman not to involve himself with white egalitarians or businessmen of a more "moderate" stripe, he opinioned that, "The problem with the white people will be to keep in touch with those who are truly in control and who are leaders of the county and not to let the radical integrationists get into the picture."[614]

Re-Opening the School Doors

Free School administrators leased the buildings used for the system from the Prince Edward School Board, which provided janitorial services and general upkeep for a price of $2900 per month. Some observers resented the appearance that the county reaped financial benefit from its refusal to operate its own public school system, but in truth, the entire $2900 flowed back out of the board's coffers every month in maintenance costs. The board levied no charge for use of the buildings, but abandoned since 1959, they required a great deal of rehabilitation work. The buildings mutually agreed on for use included the new Moton High School, the old Moton High School, now known as Mary E. Branch School #2, Mary E. Branch School #1, and Worsham School. Moton High and the two Branch schools, both located in Farmville, constituted the only

[614] Gravatt to Darden, 14 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 11, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

three brick buildings among the fifteen structures formerly used as black schools. Worsham School, formerly occupied by white students, stood five miles south of Farmville in the Kingsville district. Farmville High, already the source of so much contention, was conspicuously absent from the list.[615]

When the Free School lease commenced in September, none of the buildings stood ready for occupancy. While School Board members later insisted that they kept all of the public school buildings in excellent condition, upon walking through them for the first time Neil Sullivan received the distinct impression that "the powers that be in Prince Edward County had written them off entirely. Apparently they had never had any intention of reopening public schools once the private white academy was established." Dirt, dust, and debris cluttered the hallways. Fallen plaster covered the floors and water stains discolored the walls. Of all the building roofs, only Moton High remained secure. Heating, plumbing, and electrical systems needed work. The public schools' Facilities Manager introduced himself to Sullivan with a warning to expect trouble from heating, plumbing, and electrical systems and a statement that he would take orders from the new superintendent, but not from an African American.[616]

However, the greatest problem confronting the Free School Trustees was not facilities or supplies, but rather the challenge of assembling during the last days of summer a top-notch faculty capable of teaching such severely disadvantaged youngsters. The vast majority of teachers across the country had already signed binding contracts for

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[615] Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Board of Trustees, Box 1, Folder 4, ibid; Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 7 December 1963, Box 1, Folder 7, ibid; Maxwell Hahn to Colgate Darden, 17 September 1963, Box 1, Folder 13, ibid; William Vanden Heuvel to Maxwell Hahn, 19 September 1963, ibid.

[616] Sullivan, p. 17-18. 54-55.

the coming academic year, and the Association had no interest in becoming a "last resort" for untrained or unemployed individuals. Sullivan cringed at the very thought of telling prospective applicants that the facilities were in disarray, the textbooks would not arrive until several weeks into the semester, and that the local white community regarded the entire venture with distrust and skepticism. He further worried that the one year nature of the program, the salary scale (lower than the Northern average but higher than typical for Virginia) and the prospect of a nongraded system, a new experience for most teachers, would discourage those willing to accept some of the other challenges.

Hoping to rebuild a faculty that could be transferred to the public schools upon the resumption of public education, the trustees contacted the teachers who lost employment in 1959, offering first priority for hiring to any who might wish to return to the county. A sizable number responded, the majority of whom held positions elsewhere but continued to reside in Prince Edward, often commuting long distances to work. Some, such as Ernestine Herndon, who taught in Fredericksburg, lived away from their families, able to return home only on weekends and during summer vacation. Almost all of the respondents expressed interest in coming to work for the Free Schools. The majority, however, exhibited significant wariness toward the idea of breaking their contracts for a one year program that could not guarantee continued employment. Some requested assistance in petitioning their school boards for release.[617]

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[617] Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 7 September 1963, Box 1, Folder 4, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Ernestine Herndon to F.D.G. Ribble, Secretary, PEFSA, 23 August 1963, Box 19, Folder I, Series IV, ibid; Marian Anderson to Ribble, ibid; Alma Smith to Ribble, ibid.

With the exception of these elsewhere-employed individuals. the initial applicants constituted a mixed bag. A few possessed impressive qualifications and exhibited dedication enough to request leaves of absence and move across the country, or even the world: two individuals requested applications from Italy and one from Venezuela. The majority, however, did not meet the trustees' expectations. Some were movement activists who planned future careers as teachers, but to date possessed no professional experience or relevant credentials. Others, trained as educators, had difficulty securing teaching positions for a variety of reasons ranging from nervous conditions to alcoholism to criminal records. Some presented themselves poorly through badly written letters of inquiry and resumes with non-academic references.[618]

Others seemed not to understand the situation in the county, such as a Virginian who wrote that, "I have been reading in some newspapers regarding the need for teachers in Prince Edward County and I cannot say that [sic] fully comprehend just what this matter is all about." Others were clearly unsuited to working in what many of the planners hoped would be an integrated system or dealing with the complicated racial and political issues at the root of the Prince Edward crisis. One woman from New York City stated that, "I am a Negro teacher and am interested in Negro schools only....I am interested in the learning program, only, and absolutely no political maneuvers or environmental modifications." Another man wrote that he held no opinions "regarding integration or the things that our nation is now facing."[619]

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[618] Letters from Prospective Applicants, Box 19, Folder 1, Series IV, ibid; Robert Gabriner and Vicki Levins to Arthur Dudley, 27 August 1963, Box 19, Folder 2, ibid; Sullivan, p. 56.

Stepping up their recruitment program, Sullivan, Vanden Heuvel and the trustees went to work broadcasting the openings to the widest audience possible. They mailed a letter to every college and university in the United States offering a teacher training program, to every superintendent of a large urban school system, to the United States Employment Office, the armed services, the National Education Association, church groups, and personal friends across the nation. They placed advertisements in newspapers and begged assistance from J. Rupert Picott of the Virginia Teachers Association and H.I. Willett and Edwin Lamberth, superintendents of the city school systems of Richmond and Norfolk. NEA administrators screened application forms and forwarded the files of the best candidates. Fred Cole assigned two members of his Washington and Lee staff to comb the personnel files of the Richmond school system for likely candidates.[620]

Robert Williams of the Office of Education got involved and Vanden Heuvel leaned on Peace Corps officials. Edwin Lamberth connected Sullivan with Willie Mae Watson, a former Norfolk principal just returning to the U.S. from a two year term in Nigeria with the Peace Corps. The highly competent Watson, an African American, agreed to come on board as Supervisor of Elementary Education, and immediately went to work calling other former Peace Corps volunteers. Upon the realization that the system did not have enough teachers to staff the classrooms on the first day of school, eighteen students in the teacher training program at Virginia State volunteered to come to

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[619] John Richard Pack to T.J. McIlwaine, 16 August 1964, Box 19, Folder 1, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Elise Calhoun to Superintendent of Schools, 30 July 1963, ibid.

[620] Sullivan, p. 50, 57, 67, 91; Ross Coxe, NEA, to F.D.G. Ribble, 22 August 1963, Box 19, Folder 1, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

Farmville to serve as student teachers for two weeks. Some left for Prince Edward without even waiting to hear whether they would be reimbursed for their living and travel expenses.[621]

With much effort and a lot of assistance (although Virginia's statewide Office of Public Instruction offered little support), the Trustees assembled a faculty of some eighty individuals. Farmville's segregationist policies complicated matters of hiring, as when a carload of black teachers from Norfolk arrived on a Sunday to meet with Sullivan and administrators at his hotel refused them admission. The superintendent interviewed the applicants in their car instead. Sullivan and Watson conducted much of the interviewing, but a few local supporters took a turn behind the table as well. Dean Moss dropped by the makeshift offices one morning to say hello and ended up spending much of the day interviewing, turning in before leaving a stack of careful notes on the applicants seen. Rudolph Doswell – the Prince Edward County Negro Farm Agent – also spent hours questioning potential teachers.[622]

Charged with coordinating work with the black community, Earl McClenney of the Board of Trustees commissioned Doswell and his wife Lena local agents. Tireless individuals willing to work long volunteer hours, the Doswells spent the summer laboring away in the Free Schools' makeshift office in the old Moton High building. Long before any of the administrators joined the staff, and certainly before any came to Farmville, the Doswells inventoried facilities, spread the word to the local community, and handled correspondence. Lena Doswell, a teacher in a neighboring county, and her husband both

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[621] Sullivan, p. 62, 72-73.

[622] Sullivan, p. 80, 60, 73.

requested leaves of absence to join the faculty for the year, but both were denied. Rudolph Doswell, however, used his accrued vacation time to serve as acting principal at Mary E. Branch School #2 until a permanent replacement could be found. Trusted and respected members of the local community, their support helped to legitimize the Free Schools among African Americans, easing fears of an a la Southside Schools attempt to silence black leadership.[623]

At the close of hiring, the Free Schools possessed the most integrated faculty in the state – three quarters black and one quarter white. According to Neil Sullivan, only two other public schools in Virginia, both located in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area, possessed even one faculty member of a different racial background. Teachers from Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City (one was a member of the United Federation of Teachers summer program who decided to remain in Virginia and work for the Free Schools) accepted a pay cut to come to Virginia. Individuals from Maine, California, Maryland, North and South Carolina, Wisconsin, Florida and Georgia worked together in the newly cleared hallways. To the delight of the trustees, however, a little over half the faculty hailed from Virginia. Of the Virginians, an unprecedented five were white. Sullivan termed the group "starry-eyed with eagerness and idealism." The new faculty members averaged seven years of teaching experience and all held at least one academic degree. Administrators counted the final teacher-student ratio as 1:12 at the high school and 1:22 in the elementary schools.[624]

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[623] Sullivan, p. 16-17, 42, 62, 69, 81.

[624] Ibid, p. 80, 172; Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 14 September 1963, Box 1, Folder 5, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Vanden Heuvel and Sullivan, "The Prince Edward County Situation:" 12-15.

Their accomplishments preceded them. Pupil Personnel Director Arthur Dudley, an African American welfare worker from Detroit, came to the county through his work with the Michigan State research team. When unable to arrange a leave with his Board of Education, Moton High principal James Cooley gave up a secure position as assistant principal of Brunswick County Negro High School in Lawrenceville to take a chance on the Free Schools. His assistant Tom Maynard, a retired school administrator from Maine, once served on the Portland Board of Education and completed a term in the state legislature. His grown children resided in the South and he and his wife long considered the possibility of settling in Virginia. The opportunity to help in Prince Edward County offered them a reason to make the move. Vera Allen, the principal at Branch School #1, a Farmville native with more than twenty years experience in education, left a principal's position in Wayne County, North Carolina to return to Prince Edward. Allen's daughter, Edwilda, played a leading role in the 1951 strike. When her mother lost her job in the county schools soon after, many residents concluded that public school administrations fired Allen in an act of retribution. Throughout the four years of the closings, Vera Allen saw her husband and two daughters only on the weekends. Her husband, a self-employed electrician, took care of the girls during her absence, often taking them along on jobs with him, where they sat outside eating johnny-cake under the watchful eyes of neighbors.[625]

Along with Willie Mae Watson, art teacher Bill Harris, a Virginian whose ancestors fought in the Confederate Army, and special education instructor Madge Shipp

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[625] Sullivan, p. 72-73; 46-48, 74, 81; Pamela Stallsmith, "We Did What We Had to Do In Prince Edward," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 8 August 1999; R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

came to the county with a Peace Corps background. Harris made extensive use of his connections, frequently encouraging Sargent Shriver's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) assistant, "poverty boss" Adam Yarmolinksy, to include community development programs of a type that would benefit the county in upcoming legislation. The twenty-six year old Harris, who served in Puerto Rico from 1961-63, was an unusually devoted and creative teacher. He visited his students at home, often took his classes into the woods to sketch, and encouraged his teenagers to learn lettering in order to improve the appearance of the picket signs he proudly assumed many would carry in the future. Shipp, a Detroit native whose grandparents fought their way out of slavery, possessed an equal devotion to understanding her students' home lives. In their visitation rounds, often performed together, Harris and Shipp occasionally ran across situations they thought the school system could improve. After finding five abandoned children living with a sixty-five year old woman who received only $31 a month for their care, Harris intervened to secure free lunches for the children. After prize-winning painter Marjorie Deo visited his classes and confirmed his observation that "one finds in the children's paintings many directions which parallel what is current in avant-garde painting today" – Harris wrote to Vanden Heuvel to inquire into the possibility of arranging an exhibit of student artwork at a Washington, D.C. gallery.[626]

The focus on providing the children an opportunity to experience more of the world around them constituted one of the most long-lasting of the contributions made by

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[626] Sullivan, p. 172; William Harris to Neil Sullivan and Jim Cooley, 15 March 1964, Box 19, Folder 8, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Harris to Sullivan, 9 December 1963, Box 18, Folder 2, ibid; Harris to Vanden Heuvel, 7 January 1964, Box 18, Folder 3, Series IV, ibid.

the Free Schools. Regionally and nationally known artists, musicians. and performers visited the schools to provide concerts and clinics. The Dartmouth College Glee Club's April concert provided Southside Virginia its first experience with a northern college group performing before a mixed audience. Washington Redskins halfback Bobby Mitchell came to advise the students not to "stand on the corner" throughout life. Field trips to Richmond, Williamsburg, Appomattox Courthouse, Mt. Vernon, Booker T. Washington National Memorial (after all. Washington's successor at Tuskegee was none other than Robert R. Moton himself, a native of Prince Edward County) and Charlottesville exposed these young Virginians to some of the sites that lent their state historical significance. Journeys to Washington, D.C. included touring the campus of Howard University - home to the nation's most brilliant black community – and sitting in the gallery of the U.S. Senate to hear some of the debate on the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[627]

Twenty-eight children traveled to New York City as guests of a student group at City College. They sat in on classes at Manhattan's integrated P.S. 192, met mayor Robert Wagner at City Hall, attended a children's ballet at Lincoln Center, and watched the taping of a television show at Rockefeller Center. When they toured the United Nations building, Ralph Bunche himself took time out of his schedule to visit with them. In the highlight of the trip for many of the boys, the group lunched at the Stamford, Connecticut home of Mr. and Mrs. Jackie Robinson. Sullivan's East Williston friends sponsored trips to Long Island, where the students stayed with host families and the

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[627] Sullivan to Arthur Dudley, James Cooley, Thomas Maynard, and Wilbert Edgerton, 10 February 1964, Box 18, Folder 4, ibid; Sullivan to Fredric Corrigan, Business Manager, Dartmouth College Glee Club, 7 April 1964, Box 19, Folder 9, ibid; Sullivan, p. 185-189.

Moton High basketball team took on the Wheatley Varsities. In an effort to provide as many positive experiences as possible for those most deeply affected by the closings, building principals carefully selected participants out of school for the entire four year period.[628]

When *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*[629] finally came before the Supreme Court on March 30, 1964, the Justice Department arranged for tickets for a delegation from the Free Schools. Five years after the Board of Supervisors closed the schools and thirteen years after the walkout that ushered Prince Edward County into its two decades of civil rights activism and educational crisis, a group of black students looked to the justices to right the wrongs they had suffered. Sullivan and his wife, Martha, a teacher in the system, James Cooley, three other teachers, and the five students with the highest GPAs at Moton High – demonstration leader Grace Poindexter, Herbert Lee, Roger Madison, Jr., John Branch, and plaintiff Skippy Griffin – sat in the courtroom to hear final arguments on the case that forever changed their lives.[630]

The affiliation between the Free Schools and the Kennedy family also served to bring national politics closer to the students. In the aftermath of John Kennedy's assassination, many of the children, who felt a personal connection to the President due to his role in kick-starting the process of providing them a school, experienced a more severe devastation than others their age around the country. Their grief certainly

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[628] Sullivan, p. 186-188; Sullivan to James Cooley, Charles Jarrell, Vera Allen and Mary Walton, 3 December 1963, Box 18, Folder 2, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

[629] *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964).

[630] Sullivan, p. 191-198.

outweighed that of the majority of white adults in their region, which maintained an unswerving hostility toward Kennedy and his policies. Each of the 1567 students in the Free Schools signed his or her name – some of whom could not have done so without the school – to a memorial scroll bearing the inscription:

> *Our beloved President John F. Kennedy once considered us in our distress. We, the students of Prince Edward County Free Schools in Farmville, Virginia, think of Caroline, John, and Mrs. Kennedy in their sorrow. It is also ours.*[631]

Hoping to raise $47 for the Kennedy Library Fund – a dollar for each year of the President's life – the students organized a fund drive. Administrators stressed that the poorer children not be pressured to "give pennies which come awfully hard here in Prince Edward County," but the students exhibited a deep desire to be generous to the memory of a man they admired. By the time Robert and Ethel Kennedy arrived in Farmville to visit the Free Schools on May 11, 1964, the children's collections totaled $99.94. Administrators bustled around in advance of the visit to make visible the relationship between the schools and the Attorney General's family, placing photographs of the late President Kennedy in the entryway and library of each building and decorating the Moton High stage with American flags.[632]

Sullivan sent instructions to teachers to remind their classes that the Attorney General was the brother of the assassinated president and should be addressed as "General Kennedy" rather than "Mr. Kennedy." He sent one hundred carefully selected

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[631] Sullivan, p. 161-162.

[632] Sullivan, p. 204-205; Sullivan, Memo to Watson, Allen, Walton, Cooley, Jarrell, and Maynard, 7 April 1964, Box 18, Folder 4, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sullivan to Cooley, Allen, Walton, Jarrell, 1 May 1964, Box 18, Folder 7, ibid.

children to Farmville Airport to serve as the couple's welcoming committee. In an effort to highlight the integrated nature of the venture, Sullivan included all eight of the Free Schools' white pupils in the group, along with fifty of the "very, very small children" from Worsham Elementary. The day proved greatly successful, exciting for the children and staff and meaningful for the visitors. As one Kennedy aide told Sullivan, "The Attorney General was happier in the Free Schools than he has been for many, many months."[633]

Free Schools and White Skin

Sullivan considered the enrollment of eight white students in the Free Schools both a victory and a disappointment. Dean Moss and his seventeen year old son Dickie, PEFSA's first white student, both hoped that his presence would help demonstrate to the white community "that integrated schools are not quite the horrendous thing that they think they are." Though Norfolk and Richmond papers covered Dickie's enrollment, Moss believed that the *Farmville Herald* deliberately suppressed the news that the schools would be interracial. Dickie's homecoming proved difficult – the white friends who stuck with him throughout his years in Richmond boarding school now ostracized him – but his black classmates elected him a class officer and he participated in most Free School activities. When Mr. and Mrs. William Tew enrolled their eight year old daughter Letitia, threats soon followed. The Tews were not civil rights pioneers. They never spoke out publicly against the closing of the schools. But they protested silently by refusing to send their daughter to the Academy, partially because they could not afford

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[633] Sullivan, Memo to Walton, Allen, Jarrell, Dudley, and Martha Sullivan, 5 May 1964, Box 18, Folder 7, ibid; Sullivan, Memo to Staff, 12 May 1964, ibid.

tuition and partially because both held a firm conviction that education should be free. As soon as the news of her enrollment hit the streets of Farmville, the rapidly shrinking Academy scholarship fund offered the Tews the necessary funds to pay Letitia's tuition. Upon their refusal, a white resident made a public threat that, "Your head will be cut off if you let Letitia go to school with the niggers on Monday." Threats to bomb the bus that would carry her to school soon followed.[634]

A year later, the Tews remained outcasts in Prince Edward society. Passersby pointed and laughed when they entered Farmville, and taunts of "Negro lover" followed them around the county. Vandals repeatedly targeted their mailbox and operators forced them to remove a "Johnson-Humphrey" sticker from their car in order to secure a place in the local tobacco selling barn. After whispering to each other, the buyers declared their tobacco too rough and stated that it would not bring a price. When the Tews returned the following morning with a load hand-picked for its smooth quality, buyers disregarded it as too smooth to bring a price. But upon taking their crop to another county to sell, they quickly achieved a fair price. After a visit with them in November 1964, AFSC's Nancy Adams wrote that:

> The Tews feel isolated, they are bitter. They are very uneducated people...a terribly confused couple. It seems to be evident that they chose to send their daughter to the Free School not so much out of conviction as out of desperate need. Now, they find themselves inexorably caught. They are miserable in the community, they want to get away, but financially they are simply unable to do so. Mrs. Tew says that she regrets the day that they ever moved here, and that she regrets the day that she sent her child to the Free School.[635]

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[634] C.G.G. Moss to Darden, 19 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 11, Series I, ibid; Darden to Moss, 21 August 1963, ibid; Sullivan to Director of Admissions, Colby College, 17 February 1964, Box 21, Folder 6, Series IV, ibid; Sullivan, Memo to Cooley and Maynard, 10 December 1963, Box 18, Folder 2, Series IV, ibid; Sullivan, p. 81-82.

The third and fourth white pupils enrolled a few days before the beginning of the school year. Newcomers to the county, George and Brenda Abernathy were children of a struggling tobacco farmer who recently moved his family to a small piece of land approximately fifteen minutes from Farmville. After hearing Sullivan speak on the radio about the Free Schools, their father sent word that he wanted to enroll them without publicity. One of the few whites in Prince Edward not tremendously bothered by the concept of integrated schools, Abernathy told Sullivan that "the kids went to an integrated school in Portsmouth and it didn't hurt them none." White enrollment doubled in January when the four Lewis children – Thomas, Betty Jo, Edith Ann, and James – returned to school. Their parents, long-time Prince Edward residents who could not afford Academy tuition, told Sullivan that they refused to request money from the scholarship fund because they had no particular objection to integrated schools. A fierce pride that resented being viewed as objects of public charity, however, probably also played a role in their decision. When the Free Schools opened in September, Walter Lewis, who raised tobacco and cattle, feared that enrolling his children would upset his neighbors. "Personally, I just wanted to stay out of the whole thing," he noted in exasperation:

> I could understand the white people getting riled up about someone telling them what to do, but on the other hand you have to think of the colored people who just want what is their right. I haven't wanted to be rebellious to the community, but now I want my kids back in school. I just can't hold them out any longer to keep anybody's feelings from being hurt.

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[635] Nancy Adams to Jean Fairfax and Barbara Moffett, 28 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

His children's experience as racial minorities did not prove traumatic for them, and when the public schools reopened in September 1964, photographs of Thomas and Betty Jo walking up the sidewalk with their schoolbags in hand adorned newspapers around the country.[636]

It is possible, as Moss worried, that the emphasis placed by the state press upon the remedial nature of the Free School program discouraged some local whites who may have flirted with the idea of sending their children. As the professor pointed out to Darden, "As I understand it, the school system is going to be a total one, and the best one that has ever been in Southside Virginia. Would it be proper to put more emphasis, in the press announcements, upon this second aspect of the situation?" The number of white parents upset with the Foundation Schools certainly outweighed the number who chose to publicly break with white solidarity and enroll their children in the "government school." The realities of running a tuition-based private school system in an economically struggling rural community did not fully dawn upon white residents during the honeymoon period of 1959-1961. But with the loss of tuition grants and tax credits, and the attrition of the outside support so plentiful in the early years, the burden on parents intensified. Enrollment in the Foundation schools dropped from 1475 in 1959 to 1251 in 1962.[637]

Moss argued that that Foundation officials exhibited little concern over the impact of rising tuition rates, insisting that they "were no more interested in the poor white

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[636] Sullivan, p. 96-98, 180-182; Sullivan to Trustees, 6 January 1964, Box 2, Folder 6, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

[637] Moss to Darden, 19 August 1963, Box 1, Folder 11, Series I, ibid; Lassiter and Lewis, 134-167.

people of the county receiving an education" than in black residents receiving one. At the end of the 1962-63 academic year, school authorities withheld grades from children whose parents had fallen behind in their payments. Many families scrambled to find the funds to pay off their debts. Anita Spencer, a black member of Moss's "biracial" committee, lent a white neighbor the fifteen dollars she needed to complete her payments. Moss rejoiced when K.H. Latham, a Specialist-6 in the U.S. Army stationed at Washington, D.C.'s Fort McNair, decided to take his grievances with the Academy public. Unable to interest the *Farmville Herald* in doing a story on his family's situation, Latham approached Moss, who quickly arranged an interview with John Hamilton of the *Lynchburg News*. Latham, a career soldier and twenty year resident of the county, returned to Prince Edward every weekend to visit his wife and children. A $480 scholarship from the Foundation kept his three school-age children in school throughout the first year without public financing. However, when his wife Doris called to register them for 1962-63, administrators instructed the family not to come in until they paid the remaining $240 owed from the previous year.[638]

Already overburdened by a mortgage, a $600 bill for aluminum siding to cover their house's paper-thin walls, a car loan, and plumbing problems, the Lathams possessed no reserve funds to pay the Foundation bill. When Doris Latham admitted as such, Academy officials offered to arrange a note to the bank. "I about blew up," she recalled. "As if we didn't have enough bills! I got mad and hung up." Calling again later, she received the same response. The first day of classes came and went, and the Latham

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[638] Boyte to Fairfax, 15 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38220, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 12 June 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, ibid; Bagwell to Fairfax, 17 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, ibid; John Hamilton, "First White Parent Blasts Prince Edward Policy," *Lynchburg News*, 30 September 1962.

children – Mary Alta, Kenneth, Jr., and William – remained at home. After two weeks of stalemate, Latham stormed into *Herald* offices demanding an opportunity to tell his neighbors exactly what he thought of the county's school policy. The following day, administrators offered him more lenient terms – a note to the Foundation not due until the following July. Denied the opportunity to publicly air his grievances and desperate to get his children back into school, Latham signed, and the Academy readmitted the three youngsters.[639]

Nonetheless, he remained angry enough to risk ostracism by telling his story to John Hamilton. The private school leaders "are like horses with blinders," he exploded. "They have a narrow view. They must be made to realize that slave days are out of date." Latham, who dropped out of school in ninth grade to go to work, and Doris, who did not complete seventh and now worked as a hand-stitcher at the local shoe factory, wanted more for their children than a life of drudgery. Turning the rhetoric of constitutionalism upon the white leaders, K.H. Latham complained that "they're denying my children part of the Constitution. I want free public schools for all...We need more education for everybody. It cuts crime, it makes a community prosper. An educated citizen is a self-reliant citizen." The Virginia Human Relations Council and Virginia State Conference NAACP reprinted Hamilton's article and sent a copy to every boxholder in Prince Edward County. Some recipients disregarded the story, arguing that the Lathams were "undesirable citizens" who owed many local merchants and often failed to pay their bills. Others maintained that the family's straits were not nearly so dire as suggested and that they could easily pay the Foundation the $240 owed. Some, however, believed that the

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[639] John Hamilton, "First White Parent Blasts Prince Edward Policy," *Lynchburg News*, 30 September 1962.

negative publicity forced Foundation officials to reinstate other children in similar circumstances and offer their parents more time to pay their bills.[640]

Readers of the *News* reacted quite strongly to the article. Archie Kirkland of Petersburg wrote:

> All my life I've been taught to be proud of the heritage that has been handed down from the first settlers who landed at Jamestown...Virginia is the birthplace of our nation, a nation based on the principles that "all men are created equal" and of "liberty and justice for all." What has happened to this great heritage? Why is it that people cry for their rights with one breath, and with the next, condone such outright violations of our professed "freedoms" and "rights" as are taking place in Prince Edward County?

George Hatzes, Jr. of Alexandria agreed, arguing that "to deny our citizens an education because of race, color, funds or religion is perhaps the greatest single act towards the development of socialism and communism in our country...Our state has been permeated with the foul air of mental bankruptcy." R.G. McCallister, Jr., student editor of the Hampden-Sydney *Tiger*, however, held nothing but contempt for the story, which he termed "a new low in journalism." His anger extended to the reprinters, whom he ridiculed for misspelling Hampden-Sydney as "Hampton-Sydney," lashing out that "your addresser is apparently being denied an opportunity to learn to spell. Which conservative group bears the blame for this?"[641]

Foundation president B. Blanton Hanbury printed a response in the *Herald*, maintaining that all parents, including the Lathams, possessed the right to contact the

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[640] Bagwell to Fairfax, 17 December 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38437, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; John Hamilton, "First White Parent Blasts Prince Edward Policy," *Lynchburg News*, 30 September 1962.

[641] Archie Kirkland, Letter to Editor, *Lynchburg News*, 14 October 1962, clipping, 1962 Box, Folder 38747, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; George Hatzes, Jr., Letter to Editor, ibid; R.G. McCallister, Jr., Letter to Editor, ibid.

scholarship committee if dissatisfied with the grants allocated. Insisting that the Lathams not only never complained, but actually ignored five months of tuition statements and three months of reminder letters, he argued that "the Foundation stands ready to serve the patrons in any way possible, but expects and needs the cooperation of the patrons." Insisting that the family income exceeded $500 per month, Hanbury absolved school officials of blame by hinting that "the Foundation cannot and will not provide education to patrons who are able to pay the tuition, or their fair share of the tuition charges, and refuse to do so."[642]

To their credit, Foundation officials recognized that many Prince Edward parents simply could not afford private school tuition. A Scholarship Fund Drive Committee worked hard to solicit funds to supplement parental contributions. The majority of the $136,000 raised for 1961-62 came from donors outside the county inspired to lighten "the undue burden upon the people of Prince Edward." In the 1962-63 drive, the committee turned its attention toward local businesses and residents. Noting the recent reduction in the county tax rate from $3.50 per hundred dollars to $1.00 per hundred dollars, they argued that the substantial reservoir of funds released should in good conscience be channeled into the private schools. Reminding the community that "the Prince Edward School Foundation and its policies must be continued in order to provide education for our children," committee members applied substantial pressure to local business people in an effort to ensure that their tax savings flowed back into Foundation coffers. S.W.

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[642] B. Blanton Hanbury, "Foundation President Replies to Criticism," *Farmville Herald*, 12 October 1962.

Putney, owner of Putney Plumbing and Heating Company, told Harry Boyte that a number of businessmen, angered by the heavy-handed tactics, refused to donate.[643]

The committee charged with distribution of scholarship funds wielded considerable power over patrons of the Foundation – namely the power to decide an applicant's "worthiness" of assistance. Harry Boyte saw sinister forces at work in the process, commenting that, "the Foundation group obviously does not care to continue to have in attendance at its schools certain middle and lower class white economic family groups. It prefers very much to have the highly selected student body." No proof exists that the scholarship committee ever denied a request for assistance in an effort to keep a lower class family out of the school. However, Moss noted that more than a few whites passionately resented the extent to which the committee could examine patrons' finances, often making judgments such as, "you have a television in your house, you can afford private education." In 1961-62, 376 Academy families paid full tuition, 371 received partial scholarships, and thirty-two paid nothing at all.[644]

Some white parents employed tactics of trickery and deception to obtain the inaccessible state tuition grants – going so far as to rent property in adjacent counties and use these "paper addresses" as permanent addresses. Upon reception of the grants, they used the money to pay Academy tuition. Others refused to sign the notes offered by the Foundation and directly negotiated loans with local banks instead. Between 1959 and

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[643] Verle V. Gordon, Chairman, Scholarship Fund Drive, to The People of Prince Edward and Our Friends, 15 November 1962, School Closing Clippings File, LU Archives.

[644] Boyte to Fairfax, 21 May 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Kitty Terjen, "Cradle of Resistance: Prince Edward County Today," *New South*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1973): 18-27; "$130,000 Is Target For Schools: Prince Edward Fund Drive Set," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 13 September 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

1962, circumstances forced Audrey Brown of the Darlington Heights region to take out three loans – two to pay his three children's $750 tuition and one to cover the costs of his wife's serious illness and subsequent hospitalization. As Boyte noted, "his future seems to be mortgaged for several years to come." Brown and his wife told Boyte that they had long ago abandoned their concerns about desegregation and were prepared to sign any petition requesting the reopening of the public schools.[645]

Some other white residents felt the same. In a July election for Farmville Supervisor, local businessman Edwin Pairet campaigned on a platform advocating a referendum on opening the schools. Justifying his position on the grounds that the Foundation schools could not survive without tuition grants and that the county had a moral obligation to provide free education for all citizens, Pairet received 438 votes. Though handily defeated by incumbent John Steck, who continued in office with 799 votes, Pairet edged out the third candidate, C.H. Lafoon, whose position on the schools was identical to Steck's. Pairet's showing demonstrated that 27% of Farmville voters (438 of 1613) favored renewed debate on the school question.[646]

Despite these conditions, the majority of whites nonetheless greeted the Free Schools with hostility. A few local companies, ironically including the Owen-Sanford Drugstore – one of the summer demonstration sites – sent businesslike letters of welcome seeking the new system's patronage. Only Emanuel Weinberg, however, made a substantial donation toward the support of the system: air conditioners for the

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[645] Boyte to Fairfax, 2 April 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Boyte to Fairfax, 14 June 1962, ibid.

[646] "School-Reopening Advocate Is Beaten," *Richmond Time-Dispatch,* 9 July 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

administrative offices and a refrigerator for the cafeteria. Free School staff members experienced problems with mail delivery, and the newly erected sign on Route 15 indicating the turnoff for Moton High School suffered repeated incidents of vandalism. Even Farmville native Bill Baldwin, a white businessman with ties to the power structure who nevertheless served as Business Manager for the Free Schools, felt a cooling in relationships with long-time friends. Baldwin, who once told Nancy Adams that he did not like the idea of desegregation but "knew it was inevitable," and his wife did not attend staff functions after once being taunted as "traitors" for socializing with the integrated faculty team.[647]

Other employees experienced more intimidating forms of harassment. One of the teachers' mothers received a call at home in New York that her daughter would be "filled with bullets" if she did not leave Farmville. FBI agents came to town to investigate, but suggested that the call originated in New York. Sullivan and his wife were continually harassed on weekend nights by a parade of honking automobiles circling their driveway. Several staff members, including the superintendent, experienced incidents over Halloween weekend. Vandals slashed Sullivan's tires, shredded the roof and rear window of his convertible, and smeared the body of his car with wax. When the police arrived to investigate, they offered their opinion that the perpetrators were black youths, suggesting that, "You've been making those Negro kids work too hard at the Free

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[647] E.W. Sanford, Jr., Executive Vice President, First National Bank of Farmville, to Sullivan, 5 September 1963, Box 19, Folder 3, Series IV, PEFSA Papers; Brantley M. Jefferson, Owen-Sanford Drug Company, to Sullivan, 9 September 1963, ibid; Sullivan, p. 159; Grady Garrett, Postmaster, Cumberland County, to Sullivan, 17 March 1964, Box 19, Folder 8, ibid; Sullivan to Trustees, 8 November 1963, Box 2, Folder 1, Series I, ibid; Sullivan to Robert Redd, 8 January 1964, Box 2, Folder 6, Series I, ibid; Nancy Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Schools, and this is just their way of letting you know they don't like it." When the *Herald* covered the incident, a local official deemed it "only a Halloween prank." Nevertheless, the sheriff's office did investigate the case and several months later arrested the perpetrators – six white teenagers. All eventually lost their drivers' licenses and received 9:00 pm curfews, but upon discovery of their racial background, law enforcement officials changed their tune and told Sullivan that "they didn't know it was *your* car."[648]

A few weeks later, an intruder fired a shot outside the Sullivans' bedroom window. Though they reported the incident immediately, several days passed before a sheriff's deputy arrived to fill out a report. The tension in the air encouraged paranoia. Ruth Field, who occasionally served as a substitute in the system, found herself extremely unnerved when a young white man slipped into her classroom. Though he turned out to be a member of a Queens College observation group who had not wanted to interrupt the lesson, Field immediately assumed that "this was a racist spying on me." When Sullivan distributed an exit questionnaire to staff members at the end of the year, requesting their opinions on a variety of matters, most respondents indicated that they experienced no thawing of community attitudes toward the Free Schools. One perceived no change in the "attitude of indifference" toward herself, but worried that the "attitude of aloofness" toward the system increased each day. Some, however, possessed undue

[648] Sullivan to Darden, 31 October 1963, Box 2, Folder 1, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sullivan to Sheriff's Office, Farmville, 18 November 1963, Box 2, Folder 2, ibid; Sullivan to Trustees, 8 November 1963, Box 2, Folder 1, ibid; Sullivan, p. 132-134.

optimism that attitudes were changing, that people were "coming around," and that the Free Schools' success had bolstered support for public education.[649]

Sullivan himself, despite his personal experiences, continually overestimated the amount of goodwill between the system and the community. Did he truly believe that a genuine revolution in community attitudes lurked just around the corner? Or were his cheery words a strategic attempt to improve conditions through repeated assertions that the relationship was harmonious? He rarely missed an opportunity to report to the trustees that he provided a tour to or held a "beneficial" meeting with a leading segregationist. Repeatedly inviting Barrye Wall, whom he later termed "my adversary," into the schools for various programs, he attempted to break down the sharp dividing lines that kept different camps apart for years. Utilizing Bill Baldwin's contacts, he asked the Business Manager to encourage local citizens – especially professional men – to visit the Free Schools.[650]

However, once leaving the county to assume the position of Superintendent of Schools in Berkeley, California, Sullivan's memory shifted. In an interview with a reporter from the *Oakland Tribune*, he spoke of "cold, calculated ostracism," of regular garbage dumps in his lawn, of nightly phone calls every hour between midnight and 6:00

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[649] Sullivan to Sheriff's Office, Farmville, 18 November 1963, Box 2, Folder 2, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sullivan, p. 131-132; Ruth Field to Mary Walton, Principal, Branch #2, 29 January 1964, Box 18, Folder 3, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Questionnaires for Professional Staff, "A Subjective Evaluation of Prince Edward County, the Students in the Free Schools, and the Community," 22 May 1964, Box 28, Folder 4, ibid.

[650] Sullivan to Darden, 31 October 1963, Box 2, Folder 1, ibid; Sullivan to Robert Redd, 8 January 1964, Box 2, Folder 6, ibid; Sullivan to Trustees, 31 January 1964, Box 2, Folder 7, ibid; Sullivan to Barrye Wall, 3 December 1963, Box 19, Folder 4, Series IV, ibid; Sullivan to T.J. McIlwaine, 21 September 1963, Box 19, Folder 4, ibid; Sullivan, Memo to School Principals, 6 January 1964, Box 18, Folder 3, ibid.

A.M., and of not being able to find a home to rent until one landlord conceded after three weeks of talks with her minister. Revealing that he and his wife slept in separate bedrooms so that "if a bomb went off our sons would have at least one parent left," he described a community considerably less "civil" than the image ceaselessly promoted by J. Barrye Wall. Sullivan's autobiographical account of the venture, *Bound for Freedom: An Educator's Adventures in Prince Edward County, Virginia,* published in 1965, went still further, describing a hate mail campaign directly linked to the progress of the legal suit and reproducing segments of some of the threatening letters.[651]

He wrote of bus drivers and bicycling students repeatedly forced off the road on the way to and from school by speeding cars and harassment from local and state police. According to Sullivan, police tailed one young faculty member so closely one night that she panicked and sped up, attempting to lose her pursuer, only to receive a speeding ticket when the officer pulled her over. The officer avowed that he had followed her to ensure she made it safely home. Music teacher Freddie Hall was arrested and heavily fined for a minor traffic violation, and many of the out-of-state teachers received citations on the first day of classes under a Virginia law requiring working residents from out of state to obtain Virginia license plates. A bit of selective enforcement characterized these citations, for police never ticketed out-of-state faculty members at Hampden-Sydney and Longwood under this statute. Ultimately, however, Sullivan indicted the general population itself:

> We all realized from the beginning that only a tiny minority of Prince Edward Countians were actively harassing us. Most of the county's white residents...were not opposing us, but neither were they welcoming us. Their

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[651] "Virginia Was Hot Spot for Berkeley School Chief," *Oakland Tribune*, 14 August 1964, clipping, Box 3, Folder 2, Series I, ibid.

> activities, their organizations, their institutions, their minds and their hearts were simply closed to us. Here our unique educational efforts were making front page news all over the country, but as far as Farmville was concerned, we were not there.[652]

The white trustees disregarded these allegations, terming them "low, sensational statements" born of "an insatiable desire for publicity." Ribble and Darden, who received personal notification of some of these incidents at their time of occurrence, now simply refused to entertain the notion that Sullivan's statements could be true. Admitting that the superintendent's performance had been "first rate," they nonetheless bemoaned that "from the personality standpoint, it [Sullivan's appointment] seems to have been unfortunate." At root of their anger lay a deep protectiveness toward Virginia's public image and fierce resentment of an "outsider" who violated the code of silence and dared tarnish the state's reputation for civility. As Ribble noted in March of 1965, "It hurts me to think that our erstwhile superintendent is going around spreading derogatory statements. Yet I feel the best procedure is to let him shout his head off until his crudities bounce back on him." Darden and his friend Barrye Wall exchanged disparaging letters vowing that they had expected such crassness and noting that "we were quite lucky to get through as well as we did." Taking on the mantle of martyrdom, Wall commented that, "If Dr. Sullivan's book is as 'factual' as his interviews, God Save the Commonwealth. I guess we can take it – we have taken everything else that has been thrown at us." Darden replied in a similar vein, agreeing that, "I am sure all of us will survive, but it is a pity that survival becomes more and more difficult."[653]

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[652] Sullivan, p. 134-140.

[653] Ribble to Darden, 14 September 1964, Box 3, Folder 2, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Darden to Ribble, 28 September 1963, Box 3, Folder 3, ibid; Ribble to Darden, 25

Others besides Darden, Ribble and Wall directed their own criticisms at some of Sullivan's actions as superintendent. The vast majority of complaints centered around the issue of control. A surprising number of faculty members resigned or experienced dismissal between the beginning of classes and the end of the year. Although the teachers' contract did not allow for dismissal by the superintendent without a formal review process by the Board of Trustees, Sullivan let several go without any board input. When questioned, the superintendent justified these dismissals on the grounds that the individuals involved possessed deep personal problems or failed to perform up to standard. Board members never intervened in his hiring and firing decisions, but occasionally exhibited some unease with the specifics of particular cases, namely the experience of Elizabeth Tennant, fired on the spot in December.[654]

In a letter to Darden penned shortly after her dismissal, Tennant explained that after making a suggestion to Sullivan about the dispersal of some donated books, the superintendent moved her from her position as a classroom teacher to one as an elementary librarian and subsequently fired her – in the school hallway during an evening basketball game. According to Tennant, upon both occasions, Sullivan confronted her in a highly emotional state, screaming and lecturing her like a child. She further alleged that the entire process unfolded without any input from the Board of Trustees or her direct supervisor, any opportunity for her to defend herself, or any formal review process. Pointing out that Sullivan's actions violated the contract, she assured the board that she

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September 1964, ibid; Ribble to Darden, 8 March 1965, Box 3, Folder 8, ibid; Darden to Wall, 22 September 1964, Box 3, Folder 3, ibid; Wall to Darden, September 1964, ibid; Darden to Wall, 24 September 1964, ibid.

[654] Sullivan to Trustees, 31 January 1964, Box 2, Folder 7, ibid.

had no intention of suing, but merely desired an opportunity to explain her side of the story.[655]

Though certainly not a racist – he believed in black equality, interacted with African Americans as equals, and held a life membership in the NAACP – Sullivan often worked behind the scenes to prevent incidents that he felt would further antagonize the white community of Farmville, on the way falling into some paternalist behavior of his own. While his judgment that such actions would have proved inflammatory might have been correct, his determination to control events denied the children certain experiences and cast himself in the role of deciding what was best for the black community. When members of the Michigan State research team returned to the county in the spring to set up their final testing procedures, Sullivan refused to cooperate with the group. The relationship between the MSU team and the Free Schools had long-standing problems. Sullivan respected project director Robert Green, but maintained a low opinion of his associates and resented what he perceived as the group's interest in "gaining data for its own uses and for its greater fame." However, L.F. Griffin suspected that the real root of this new unwillingness to cooperate sprang from the visits Wall and others paid to the superintendent to complain that MSU researchers engaged in interracial dating while in Farmville the previous summer.[656]

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[655] Elizabeth Tennant to Darden, 7 January 1964, Box 2, Folder 6, ibid.

[656] Sullivan to L.F. Griffin, 26 June 1964, Box 19, Folder 6, Series IV, ibid; Sullivan, Memo to Cooley and Watson, 21 May 1964, Box 18, Folder 7, ibid; Sullivan, Memo to Staff, 19 May 1964, ibid; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 11; Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 7 December 1963, Box 1, Folder 7, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

Personally convinced that more street demonstrations could destabilize the situation, Sullivan actively worked to keep the young people's attention diverted, instructing his staff to make improving playground conditions at Branch #1 and #2 a major priority. Maintenance installed four new backboards on the small basketball court at Branch #2 in March and floodlights on both properties, thus encouraging evening play. He hired young teachers and older students as playground supervisors to keep the areas safe after school and on weekends. While making his case for the release of funds for the floodlights, Sullivan wrote Bill Baldwin that:

I am convinced that if we give these Negro children and young adults enough recreational opportunities, local businessmen will not have to worry about picketing…I realize that we have limited dollars in the budget, but I feel any expenditures here might be more important than spending the dollars elsewhere.[657]

When putting together the schedule for a summer enrichment program to run from June to August, Sullivan originally hoped to use a thrice-weekly afternoon swimming activity as a lure to tempt older students to enroll. Though 900 children signed up for the program, the majority came from the elementary grades. In a late May conversation with Nancy Adams, he noted that the cost of admission at Prince Edward County Park (the region's recreation area for blacks) exceeded the program budget and that planners were looking at local lakes instead. Charging that "as soon as we found a body of water which would do and got permission to use it, the county declared the water polluted," he blamed

[657] Sullivan to Dudley, Wiggins, Walton, Cooley, and Maynard, 18 March 1964, Box 18, Folder 5, Series IV, ibid; Sullivan to Hall, Watson, Walton, White and Morton, 13 May 1964, Box 18, Folder 7, ibid; Sullivan to Baldwin, 29 April 1964, Box 18, Folder 6, ibid.

local authorities for blockading the program. Insisting that swimming had proven impossible, he turned his attention toward arts and crafts and athletic programs.[658]

Adams, however, nurtured a suspicion that Sullivan's explanation did not constitute the full story and asked Griffin to check into it. Upon further questioning, the superintendent reluctantly admitted that he only investigated one lake, then dropped the project because the Board of Trustees opposed it. Sullivan ascribed their position to the fact that Colgate Darden lost a son to drowning and heartily opposed aquatic activities as a general principle. The lake investigated was owned by the Evans family and formed the centerpiece of a summer camp catering to African American children from the North. When Adams called upon the Evans's, they found her story perplexing. Acknowledging that Martha Sullivan had approached them about using the lake, they nonetheless responded that it was not polluted. They used its water in their home for drinking and cooking and county authorities always accorded it a satisfactory health rating. Unless county officials informed Sullivan of a change in the lake's rating without notifying the owners, which seems unlikely, it appears logical to assume that the abandonment of the project sprang from the Board of Trustees' disapproval. Despite the incident involving Darden's son, both Griffin and Adams suspected that the trustees' true concern lay in avoiding an interracial swimming situation that would have antagonized local whites. If this is true, it is likely that Sullivan invented the pollution problem as a cover for the Board's action.[659]

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[658] Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[659] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, ibid.

Jean Fairfax acknowledged years later that Sullivan might have operated under instructions from the Board of Trustees or his Washington, D.C. superiors to be discreet and cautious, but observed that "he didn't appreciate any criticism." "Someone like Sullivan, coming into a situation like this, is God," she commented. "Everybody has said you are rescuing this terrible situation, and he doesn't want to be told that he's not..." AFSC staff members, whose lobbying efforts in Washington proved so important in prodding federal officials to organize a relief effort, saw both benefit and damage in the Free School program. They applauded the hard work and dedication of the faculty members and federal "friends" and rejoiced at seeing a high quality school finally made available to the forgotten children of the county. Nancy Adams was in and out of the schools, sometimes bringing with her groups of out-of-county visitors. She regularly interacted with staff members in the course of her efforts to plan enriching interracial activities and build a local coalition demanding that the reopened public schools maintain the high academic quality of the Free Schools.[660]

Nonetheless, AFSC representatives, Adams included, continually challenged Sullivan and the trustees to expand the Association's role in the community and provide a model of how a progressive, modern educational system could improve life in the county. In October 1963, Fairfax queried Darden as to, "what do you see as your role in the community," offering a list of ways the system could reach out beyond the limitations of a traditional school – including night classes for adults, a cultural events calendar, and a large-scale vocational guidance and training program for community members. Fairfax

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[660] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 7, 11; Sullivan to Cooley and Jarrell, 15 April 1964, Box 18, Folder 6, ibid; Fairfax, Statement Regarding Free School Association, 14 August 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38553, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

and Adams cherished a particular concern for the older youth – the ones whose obstacles to returning to the classroom were so clearly revealed in Ruth Turner's summer interviews. Aware that money and interest existed in Washington to operate a job-training program in Virginia, but that the state exhibited little interest, Fairfax asked Darden to consider volunteering the Free Schools as a sponsor. Darden declined, but PEFSA did make an effort to affiliate itself with the emerging Southside Virginia Vocational Training Program established in neighboring Nottoway County the following spring.[661]

The program, authorized under the terms of the National Manpower Training Act of 1962, brought together HEW, the Department of Labor, the Virginia State Board of Education, and the Virginia State Employment Commission in an effort to interest unemployed young people and high school dropouts from a nine county area in learning a trade. The Farmville branch of the Virginia State Employment Commission (VSEC) sponsored television and radio advertisements to publicize the new program and tested, counseled and referred prospective students to the interracial school at Crewe. After months of postponement, a representative of the VSEC finally traveled to Moton High in June to address the student body regarding the program. Fairfax, however, deemed these recruitment tools insufficient, arguing that the program could hardly claim to offer real opportunities to black youths without engaging the black community in the planning process. Nancy Adams concurred, ridiculing the assumption that sending fliers home with Free School students would effectively reach at-risk members of the community. Her relationship with the school was slightly rocky – office officials told her on her first

[661] Fairfax to Sullivan, 16 September 1963, ibid; Fairfax to Darden, 17 October 1963, Box 1, Folder 18, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

visit that the students were all gone for the day and invited her to come back another time. Noticing a large number of cars in the parking lot and a significant amount of activity in the building, she wondered if she had been rebuffed, but agreed to return another day.[662]

Sullivan wrote the trustees in April that approximately one hundred Prince Edward youth, all of whom chose not to enroll in the Free Schools, affiliated themselves with the Crewe program. A week later, however, a VSEC official told Adams that only five or six county teenagers, two or three of whom were white, had enrolled. Concerned about Free School dropouts, both Adams and Sullivan pressed the VSEC to request a waiver of the policy requiring a full year between dropping out of school and enrolling at Crewe. When the waiver finally came, it failed to discontinue the policy of barring Free School dropouts from the twenty dollars per week stipend that made it possible for economically disadvantaged youth to quit their menial jobs and pursue vocational training. Enrollment never exceeded 70% capacity and the school soon shifted its' emphasis to adults. By spring 1965, VSEC officials predicted that unless the federal government bailed them out financially, the operation would close by the summer and the Nottoway Public Schools would buy the building and equipment.[663]

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[662]Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Board of Trustees, 7 December 1963, Box 1, Folder 7, ibid; Cleve Loman, State Supervisor, Manpower Training Service, Virginia State Board of Education, to Sullivan, 19 December 1963, Box 19, Folder 4, Series IV, ibid; Fairfax to Sullivan, 6 January 1964, Box 19, Folder 5, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams, Statement to the North Carolina Fund, December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38575.

[663] Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Houston Martin, Virginia State Employment Commission, 21 December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38575; Eleanor Eaton, Assistant Secretary, Community Relations Division, to Fairfax, 21 January 1964, ibid; Eaton to Moffett and

Deeply frustrated by both the failing program and state officials' propensity to blame the project's troubles on limited motivation among rural youths and their families, Adams freely criticized the program to anyone in a position to do anything about it. Noting the fifty miles between Farmville and Crewe and the lack of a connecting road, which a commuter to travel halfway to Richmond before making a U-turn and driving back in the opposite direction, she deemed the transportation offered students wholly inadequate. Given that AFSC spent the fall and winter of 1963-64 working to get the information it gleaned through Ruth Turner's interviews incorporated into the vocational program, she deeply resented that so few of staff members' recommendations achieved acceptance.[664]

After several meetings with Houston Martin at VSEC's Farmville office, Adams wrote the official a blistering letter spelling out her critiques of the program and noting pointedly that, "In view of the fact that all of these needs and suggestions were made prior to the initial drafts of the Southside Vocational School Program, and that assurance was given us that these needs would be met, I am sure you can understand my disappointment and concern." Quickly exposing the flaws in the recruitment program, she pointed out that scheduled informational sessions at county court houses – intimidating symbols of power universally known as "white" spaces – would never attract black attendees. As for newspaper and radio ads, she reminded Martin that, "Negroes in our area have habitually and tacitly been excluded from the so-called 'come one, come

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Fairfax, 11 December 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Sullivan to Trustees, 10 April 1964, Box 2, Folder 12, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU.

[664] Adams, Statement to the North Carolina Fund, December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38575, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Martin, 21 December 1964, ibid.

all, open to the public' announcements." Pushing for recruitment sites at black business and churches and a door-to-door campaign with a black recruiter, she argued that what Martin interpreted as youths' "lack of enthusiasm and apparent disinterest" was in reality "cultural deprivation and mistrust of the larger society" that regularly barred them from participation.[665]

Pushing further, Adams insisted that the absence of a remedial pre-vocational program or job counseling service barred many students from the program. As an example, she pointed to the case of a graduate who did not respond to a request that he come in post-graduation to discuss job openings in northern Virginia. She suggested that if the program had ever made an effort to speak with him and his parents on a personal level, it might have proved able to soothe his mother's fears that no one would take care of him if he left home to pursue employment. Most controversially, perhaps, Adams urged the VSEC to face up to its own history of subjecting blacks to humiliating treatment. Noting that prior to Martin's tenure, the Farmville office had a particularly nasty relationship with blacks, she encouraged him to recognize the enormity of the hurdle confronting local African Americans. Turning Martin's arguments on his head, she placed the blame for low enrollment on VSEC itself. Drawing attention to the lack of black staff members and the practice of serving the almost exclusively black semi-skilled applicants at a separate counter than the nearly all-white skilled ones, she insisted that the Farmville office could hardly consider itself accessible and welcoming. Some sympathetic OEO officials encouraged Adams to submit an account of the project's failures to highly placed officials, maintaining that similar stories occurred across the

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[665] Adams to Houston Martin, Virginia State Employment Commission, 21 December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38575, ibid.

South, but that few observers proved willing to report them. Ultimately, however, the federal government did bail out the school. By the spring of 1967, Southside Vocational School received 90% of its funds from the OMAT office. It successfully graduated 527 students in programs ranging from auto mechanics to welding to training for nurse's assistants.[666]

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When the Free School team entered the story in 1963, the Prince Edward black community welcomed and appreciated its efforts on behalf of the children. Both parties recognized the gravity of the situation, acknowledging that the enormity of the problem far outweighed the community's capacity to handle on its own. Nevertheless, some residents cultivated an understandable resentment toward state and federal level whites for charging in so late in the story suddenly ready to be of assistance. As Edward Morton commented years later, "They should have done that a long time ago if they wanted to do something. Just don't wait until it's all over with to do something and say we feel sorry for you." Griffin once noted in frustration that the Free Schools pacified people, covering up the rawness of race relations and sapping energy from the fight.[667]

J.T. Jackson, Jr. noted that local blacks initially embraced many of the early northern volunteers in the county as "knights in shining armor" come to deliver residents

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[666] Ibid; Eaton to Moffett and Fairfax, 11 December 1964, ibid; Gladys Lawson, "Southside Vocational School," *The VOICE*, February 1967, Vol. 3, No. 1, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[667] Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, ibid.

from poverty and ignorance, but soon became more cautious. "We didn't always feel like those people had total empathy for our position," he explained:

> We sometimes felt like they had selfish motives, they were there to make careers for themselves, or be on television, or whatever the case may be...There were several of those people who wrote articles and books and things like that about their experience and we didn't feel like their depiction of what happened accurately portrayed what really happened. It was more of "I'm a hero and I ride into town and I shoot the outlaws and then I ride off into the sunset." And it kind of missed the whole purpose or the whole idea of what went on there.

Over the years, a number of Prince Edward blacks expressed particular displeasure with Sullivan's *Bound for Freedom*, which some perceived as the story of a hero who took people who could barely function as human beings and opened up the world to them. Local readers took offense at the repetition of the theme that the children had "lost all ability to communicate" and did not even know their own names, and the implication that the Free Schools, rather than all the efforts that came before and continued long after Sullivan left for California, provided the salvation of the county.[668]

That said, 1963-64 constituted a solid educational success. End-of-the-year tests suggested that many Free School pupils advanced an average of two academic years in ten months. Twenty-three seniors graduated from Moton High – the first graduating class in five years. Nineteen possessed college or business school plans or held offers of vocational employment in hand. Some pupils learned that they could indeed return to school, while others made their first delayed foray into the halls of education. The quality of instruction and resources in the Free Schools were unparalleled in Southside Virginia, perhaps in the South. For ten unprecedented months, the United States granted

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[668] J.T. Jackson, Jr., interview by Laurie and Ken Hoen, 11 November 1992, transcript, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

these forgotten children their right to the free education that might prove their ticket up in the world. Sullivan told Charles Cox of *Roanoke World News* that:

> This [success] resulted from the new techniques used the Free Schools, namely team teaching, nongraded school and a very dedicated staff. It resulted from an extended school day, a long school week – including Saturdays and Sundays – together with field trips taken from Farmville to the United Nations in New York. It resulted from fighting poverty by providing the children with the necessary food and clothing making it possible for them to attend school. What we accomplished in the Free Schools can be and should be accomplished in every community in America. It can be done if we put our minds to the problem.[669]

Outside observers applauded the innovative program. A poll of Associated Press staff writers, newspapers, and radio and television stations in Virginia ranked the Free Schools the state's top news story for 1963. Yet the situation remained grave. Four years of scholastic negligence left scars far too deep to be repaired in the span of one academic year. The Free Schools did not provide a panacea for all the county's ills, academic or social, and as Sullivan admitted early in the year, "It is impossible for anyone outside Prince Edward County to estimate the seriousness of the situation. I, personally, completed underestimated the problem."[670]

Ultimately, the federal program proved unable to assuage the white majority's hostility toward integrated schools or to prepare the county to resume responsible maintenance of a public educational system. In the wake of the Supreme Court's May 1964 ruling in *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*,[671] municipal

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[669] Sullivan, Memo to Cooley, Maynard, Walton, Dudley, Edgerton, Watson, Allen, and Jarrell, 13 May 1964; Box 18, Folder 7, Series IV, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Sullivan to Harvey Bond, 23 October 1963, Box 20, Folder 1, ibid.

[670] "Prince Edward Schools Rated Top State Story," 27 December 1963, clipping, Box 1, "1963 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

[671] *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964).

officials reopened the schools on a skeletal budget. Substituting financial starvation for outright defiance, they purposefully kept the public schools under-funded, overcrowded, poorly staffed, academically weak, and 99% black. AFSC staff members stepped back into the forefront of the struggle to spearhead an interracial coalition of local residents demanding that authorities lay aside their resentment and hostility and – after thirteen years of legal action – adequately fund the county school system.

CHAPTER 8

"THE LAW HAS SPOKEN:" THE RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, 1964-65

Ten years and one week after the Supreme Court first ruled on school desegregation in Prince Edward County, its decision for the plaintiff in *Griffin v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* invalidated school closings as an avenue for circumventing *Brown*. Responding to NAACP lawyer Robert Carter's warning that allowing Prince Edward County to avoid desegregation would spark a rash of school closings across the South, the Court identified the closings as racially-motivated and therefore unconstitutional. Writing for the Court in its May 25, 1964 decision, Justice Hugo Black stated unequivocally that:

> The time for mere deliberate speed has run out...This case has been delayed since 1951 by resistance at the state and county level, by legislation, and by lawsuits. The original plaintiffs have doubtless all passed high school age. There has been entirely too much deliberation and not enough speed in enforcing the constitutional rights which we held in *Brown v. Board of Education* had been denied Prince Edward County Negro children.[672]

The ruling in *Griffin*, the most important school desegregation case since *Brown*, set the stage for the more controversial decisions that followed throughout the next decade. Between 1968 and 1971, the Supreme Court struck down the "freedom of choice" escape clause adopted by the majority of school boards confronted with desegregation suits. In demanding an end to "racially identifiable" schools, the Court laid the foundation for the highly controversial busing plans of the 1970's.[673] Though

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[672] *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964).

U.S. Solicitor General Archibald Cox, the Justice Department's William Vanden Heuvel, Virginia Assistant Attorney General Robert D. McIlwaine III, and S.W. Tucker all played a role in arguing the case, the ultimate face-off matched the NAACP's Robert Carter and Defender leader Segar Gravatt. Carter's argument sidestepped the question of whether localities have a constitutional obligation to provide public schools, centering instead on the idea that the unconstitutionality of the case lay in the county's attempt to evade the desegregation order. Gravatt, on the other hand, insisted that education had not been abandoned, only altered to "enlarge the liberty of the citizen" by allowing parents to choose a private school of their own selection with the assistance of public funds.[674]

Noting that "grounds of race and opposition to desegregation" do not qualify as constitutional basis for abandoning public education, the justices remanded the case to the district court with instruction to provide "quick and effective" relief to the petitioners and to continue to forbid the expenditure of any public funds in the support of the private schools so long as the public ones remained closed. They also empowered the district court to, "if necessary," issue a ruling stating that "the Prince Edward County public

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[673] The most significant of the 1968-1971 decisions included *Green v. New Kent County* [391 U.S. 430 (1968)], which struck down "freedom of choice" plans that failed to bring about real desegregation, ordering district judges to assess the constitutionality of proposed plans by the criteria of whether or not they promised meaningful and immediate progress toward disestablishing *de jure* segregation; *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education* [396 U.S. 19 (1969)], which overturned the Nixon administration's approval of a request for delay of earlier court orders mandating immediate desegregation of 30 Mississippi school districts, and *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Board of Education* [402 U.S. 1 (1971)], which validated court-ordered busing to achieve racial balance in districts once segregated by law.

[674] Anthony Lewis, "High Court Hears Key Schools Case," *New York Times*, 31 March 1964.

schools may not be closed to avoid the law of the land while the state permits other public schools to remain open at the expense of the taxpayers." As a final step, over the dissent of Tom Clark and John Marshall Harlan, the majority of the justices invested the lower court with the power to direct the Board of Supervisors to levy taxes to raise adequate funds to resume public school operations on a desegregated basis. Though the question of tuition grants was originally a substantial aspect of the case, in the final brief, Carter chose to footnote the issue, perhaps providing the Court the excuse needed to pass on the question altogether. Deeply annoyed by this decision not to explicitly seek a general order invalidating the payment of tuition grants to racially discriminatory private schools, Tucker and Marsh admitted to Nancy Adams that they had not wanted Carter to argue the case in the first place. Both felt that Tucker possessed a greater command of the issues at stake, but ultimately decided not to make an issue of it "because of the difficulties within the organization [the NAACP] which would have been created."[675]

In the wake of the ruling, Prince Edward municipal authorities engaged the district court in a dance of defiance and delay, pushing the timeframe for action to its legal terminus before grudgingly agreeing to reopen the public schools. Though some ideologues continued to spout outright defiance, dismissing the Supreme Court decision as invalid and nonbinding, the majority of the Board of Supervisors refused to risk prosecution for contempt of court. In the long and storied Virginia tradition of dissemblance and obstruction, they chose instead to comply with only the letter of the law, successfully wagering that so long as they actually approved a budget for the public

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[675] *Griffin v. Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964); Anthony Lewis, "High Court Bids Virginia County to Reopen Schools," *New York Times*, 26 May 1964; Nancy Adams to Jean Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

schools, the district court would not intervene to dictate the expenditures. Pointing to this woefully inadequate appropriation as proof of compliance with the court decision, they actively sought to keep the reopened schools segregated and academically weak, thus ensuring that white parents would continue to choose the Academy for their children.

Assuming that black parents would be so grateful to have schools for their children that they would not dare complain about any weaknesses in the system, they devoted the bulk of county educational funds to supporting the Academy, starved the public schools, and deftly shifted the blame for the chaotic, desperate conditions in the reopened buildings onto black students and parents. L.F. Griffin noted in frustration that "the School Board takes the attitude that education for Negro children in Prince Edward County is a privilege, not a right." The profound sacrifices endured to secure the reopening of the schools rang hollow in the face of continued obstructionism. Anguished and angry, Griffin wrote Free School organizer William Vanden Heuvel that:

> For five years, our community was without any public schools, and because of this a generation of our children are permanently crippled and disabled educationally. For years, we have suffered the ways of peace and sought from the law the justice we have been denied so long. We suffered out children to be destroyed so that the law might speak. The law has spoken. We have yet to see it obeyed.[676]

Once again, AFSC stepped into the gap, utilizing its extensive contacts in both the black and white communities to spearhead the organization of Citizens for Public Education (CPE), an interracial pressure group devoted to improving the quality of the public schools and enticing whites to return to the public system. The culmination of AFSC work in the county, CPE built upon the community organizing groundwork

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[676] L.F. Griffin to William Vanden Heuvel, 25 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38573, ibid.

already laid through previous programs and campaigns. AFSC's Nancy Adams, the primary motivating force behind the organization, challenged those influenced by AFSC's capacity building approach to leadership development to take on a more public, confrontational role in resolving the crisis. CPE's membership list read like a roster of those involved with the training centers, Friends Club, Leadership Institute, "biracial committee" and moderates' coalition.

Despite perpetually battling the climate of fear and timidity characterizing the county, plagued by deep-rooted racial mistrust among its membership, and generally ignored and derided by those in authority, CPE members nevertheless mounted a courageous challenge to municipal leaders' new strategy of starvation and strangulation. Their determination to act forged in the crucible of the crisis, many took on public roles from which they would have recoiled during the early years of the closings. Under the umbrella of CPE, black and white dissenters publicly unified for the first time in the Prince Edward struggle to unequivocally condemn the county's actions and take concrete action in opposition.

Formulating a New Strategy of Resistance

Though the absence of a tuition grant ruling deeply disappointed Griffin and other black leaders, the majority of the Prince Edward black community greeted the decision with unmitigated joy. White leaders, who devoted over $2 million to their cause since 1959 – $1.6 on the Academy, and the rest on legal fees – and sympathizers were predictably incensed. Southside Congressman Watkins Abbitt stormed that, "Never in the history of our nation has the Supreme Court intimated or held that it had the authority to compel a legislative body to levy taxes." The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* declared that

"the manner in which the highest court in the land has arrogated to itself the 'right' to order a unit of local government to levy taxes...is alarming in the highest degree." Even the *New Republic*, while celebrating the decision, noted that "some eyebrows were raised" by the assertion that federal courts could require local authorities to approve public school expenditures.[677]

Widespread gossip suggested that a September opening of the schools could be delayed by a mass resignation of the Board of Supervisors, which would necessitate a general election and postpone any discussion of the county budget. But the annual June hearing on the budget came and went with no resignations; Prince Edward's municipal authorities proved unwilling to surrender their positions of power merely to spite the district court. Nancy Adams envisioned a more productive agenda for the meeting, spending the week before visiting her contacts in the white community and urging those of a moderate bent to come to the hearing and voice their support for public school allocations. Her efforts bore fruit. Whites comprised nearly 60% of the 125 residents who packed the meeting room on the appointed day.[678]

Free School Superintendent Neil Sullivan opened the public comment period by urging the Board to proceed quickly in granting the School Board's request for $339,000 in local funds in order to allow administrators to hire teachers by September. Moton High assistant principal Thomas Maynard, the ever vigilant C.G.G. Moss, and Roger Madison, the black president of the Moton PTA, echoed the Superintendent's comments.

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[677] Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, ibid; Ben A. Franklin, "Whites Plan to Resist Any Rule Opening Prince Edward Schools," *New York Times*, 28 March 1964; qtd. in Wolters, 114.

[678] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, ibid; Board of Supervisors' Minutes, 5 June 1964, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 9, PEC Courthouse.

Providing a powerful link with 1951, Barbara Johns' grandmother, Mary Croner, rose to add her support for the appropriation. White and black members of the fledgling CPE, including Warren Scott, W.A. and Althea Jones, Ellington White, Tyler Miller, Carl Walters, and Annie Putney, vocalized their endorsement of the proposed budget. Moton High student Ronnie Branch requested approval of the funds in order that he might continue his education. The outspoken Fred Reid, an African American, went a step further, asking Board members how their consciences allowed them to sleep at night. The meeting received some press coverage, and most of the supporters left the courthouse encouraged that the proposed budget, with the inclusion of state funds, would top $600,000 and prove adequate to the needs of the children.[679]

On June 17, District Judge Oren Lewis denied an NAACP request for an injunction closing all Virginia public schools if Prince Edward did not reopen, but ordered the Supervisors to appropriate by June 25 the funds necessary to operate public schools in the fall. Lewis denied Board lawyer J. Segar Gravatt's request for information on the penalties he might impose on the Supervisors should they fail to comply. Two days prior to the deadline, the Supervisors finally gathered to discuss their options. Hugh Jenkins of Green Bay, once pegged the most defiant of the group by Harry Boyte, opened the meeting with the reading of a ten page statement expressing his views on the issue. Blaming the press and the courts for falsely presenting the decision to close the public schools as an attempt to avoid compliance with *Brown*, he avowed that Board members' true motive lay in exercising "a right that had been granted by the state of Virginia in that a legislative body may or may not appropriate funds for public education." Arguing that

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[679] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

"the purpose for which the case has gone this far was to see how much freedom and liberty I had left as an elective of my people," he insisted that the very right of self-government itself lay under siege. Drawing upon his combat experience in World War II, Jenkins fought back tears as he vowed that he could not live with himself if he betrayed the principles of government for which he once watched young men die. Referring to blacks throughout the statement as "niggers," he challenged his fellow Supervisors to resist this attempt at coercion:

> Judge Lewis will not state his penalties and if the risk is too great for you to take...to vote your own conviction, then I think that the only alternative you have is to vote today to appropriate money for the public schools, and if that is your conviction, I hope that as each day passes hereafter, your conscience will be clear and that you will never have this matter haunting you.[680]

The other members of the Board, however, despite their reluctance to change course, concluded that the national and state climate no longer favored outright resistance. Supervisors Steck, Carwile, Vaughan, and Gates outvoted Jenkins and his ally Pickett on the question of complying with the letter of Lewis's order. None, however, ever intended to comply with the spirit of the ruling. Quickly appropriating only $189,000 of the $339,000 requested, in addition to $375,000 for "furthering education of children in private nonsectarian schools" (tuition grants for Academy students), the Board embarked on its new course of action: destroying public education through budgetary starvation. Even Nancy Adams, who entertained no illusions about the Supervisors' sense of justice, found herself shocked. "I frankly thought I had heard wrong," she

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[680] Ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 23 June 1964, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse.

admitted. "The amount was so much lower than I had dreamed the Board would dare to appropriate."[681]

Under the new budget, which assumed that the public schools would serve **only** the black community, public education did resume, but in a form so crippled and hobbled to be hardly recognizable as such. The breakdown of the figures averaged a county contribution of $118 per black child and $239 per white child. In 1959, county allocations averaged $133 per child, based on a tax rate of $3.60 per $100 real and personal property. The revised 1964 tax rate was significantly lower, only $2.50 per $100. In adopting this budget, county authorities brazenly advertised their determination to devote the bulk of local resources to supporting private education.[682]

Members of the Prince Edward NAACP Youth Council immediately undertook a petition drive entitled Operation Doorknob. Demanding more money from local taxes, the petition reminded the Board that the events of previous years had created a desperate need for significant remedial education, and requested a budget based upon the assumption that the schools would be substantially integrated. Submitted at the August 4th meeting by five black CPE members, including farmer Warren Scott and former training center supervisor Josephine Thompson, it boasted 1004 signatures, at least twenty-five of which came from whites. New Commonwealth Attorney and former Farmville mayor William Watkins assured the group that the Supervisors were "extremely interested in public education." Suggesting that they submit the petition to

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[681] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 29 June 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 23 June 1964, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse.

[682] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 29 June 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

the School Board instead, he implied that a budgetary increase might prove forthcoming if the School Board were to request more money from the Supervisors. At Nancy Adams' request, two activist students from Longwood attended the meeting separate from the delegation for the purpose of note-taking, subsequently reporting that a general uproar ensued after the exit of the petitioners.[683]

According to the undercover note-takers, Jenkins commented that "if we give the niggers a million dollars it wouldn't be enough," and another snickered that the petitioners evidently mistook Prince Edward for Fairfax County (the state's wealthiest region). It is telling that the same men who pleaded such poverty when it came to black education did not bat an eye at appropriating twice the amount for tuition grants, unquestioningly considering such favoritism the natural right of white skin. Public funds supported the private school system in more surreptitious ways as well. Activists long observed that local police did not give "controversial residents" speeding tickets, chalking it up to an element of the strategy of avoidance and surface civility. In July 1964, however, one of the quieter members of a moderate family told Adams that she had recently received a ticket. In aimlessly perusing the fine print on the back, she discovered a sentence noting that "this money constitutes a donation to the Prince Edward Foundation School System." Incensed, Adams took to speeding through town in hopes of receiving a ticket herself, but law enforcement officials studiously ignored her violation of traffic laws. No further witnesses ever came forward to substantiate the story

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[683] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 4 August 1964, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse.

or provide a ticket to serve as evidence for a lawsuit. The alleged connection between traffic fines and Foundation funds remains a mystery to this day.[684]

S.W. Tucker and Henry Marsh did, however, submit a motion to Lewis asking him to direct the Board of Supervisors to increase its appropriation for the public schools. When denied, they appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court. School Superintendent McIlwaine, on the other hand, remained unruffled. Predicting that the Supervisors' expectation of an exclusively black enrollment would prove correct, he insisted that the addition of state monies and contributions from the Free School trustees would render the $189,000 a perfectly adequate sum to operate a decent school system.[685]

At the close of operations in August 1964, the Free Schools turned their movable property – all the donated books, supplies, filmstrips, and audiovisual aids – over to the public schools. The trustees also donated a sum of $25,700, broken down into $5000 for continuing the free lunch program operated throughout 1963-64; $5000 for remedial reading; $4200 to retain the services of a school nurse; $4000 for the audiovisual program; and $2500 for supporting Moton athletics. The donated materials formed the core of the public school curriculum. Students in the most heavily crowed grades found themselves forced to share the donated Free School textbooks, for the School Board, anticipating a high drop-out rate, simply refused to buy more. When the school doors opened in September, the donated supplies lay in hopeless disarray, and one of the newly

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[684] Legal Papers Also Filed Seeking Funds," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 June 1964, clipping, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[685] Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 6 July 1964, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 4 August 1964, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse.

hired teachers noted that "the lack of organization is so complete that it is enough to block the use of just about all of the equipment that was given last year."[686]

Nevertheless, the Free School funds and the state contribution did provide the padding necessary to allow the School Board to spend $365 per public school pupil in 1964-65, fifteen dollars over the state average of $350. Significantly, however, while most Virginia counties contributed 48% of the funds necessary to operate their school systems, Prince Edward supplied only 27%. The comparatively small student body further ensured higher than average overhead costs, reducing the percentage of the total budget spent directly on pupil instruction. The financial situation deteriorated even more in 1965-66, when the School Board proposed to continue the 1964-65 tax rate and again demurred to seek additional federal monies. Though it requested a higher contribution from the Supervisors, the allocation of $150,000 for tuition grants again significantly reduced the funds available to operate the schools.[687]

Approximately ninety people, evenly split between African Americans and whites, packed the June 1965 county budget hearing. CPE members in the group pled with both the Supervisors and the School Board not pursue the Board's stated proposal of lowering the average expenditure per pupil to $334, a figure well below the projected

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[686] T.J. McIlwaine to Colgate Darden, 19 August 1964, Box 3 Folder 1, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; McIlwaine to Darden, 3 September 1964, Box 3, Folder 2, ibid; Statement of Susan Ferris, R.R. Moton High School English Teacher, 7 October 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38574, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[687] Citizens for Public Education to Prince Edward County School Board, March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; CPE to Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors, 31 May 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 14 June 1965, ibid.

1965-66 state average of $373. Both bodies shrugged off the pleas, however, and the Supervisors shaved an additional $80,000 off the School Board's already bare bones request, dropping the county contribution to $300,000 of the $522,550 budget. Shunning expanded federal assistance, but continuing to seek ways to shift the burden of public education off the county, McIlwaine approached Colgate Darden to request that PEFSA donate the balance of Free School funds on hand upon finally closing its account books in spring 1965 to the public school system.[688]

Predicting that the School Board would not allocate funds for the in-school nursing program, McIlwaine suggested that the final Free School donation be applied to continuing nursing service and the free lunch program. Darden favored the proposal, but the black trustees displayed more than a little hesitation. "I am a little opposed to making any additional funds available directly to the School Board of Prince Edward County," Earl McClenney of St. Paul's College noted. "I feel that the county should assume whatever responsibilities normally would be assumed by a county for its school children." Both McClenney and Virginia State's Robert Daniel preferred channeling the funds through the emerging War on Poverty programs, but in the end, the majority of the trustees voted to engage directly with the School Board, donating $7364.88 and permanently closing the Free Schools' bank account.[689]

Conditions in the Schools

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[688] Board of Supervisors Minutes, 8 June 1965. Supervisors' Records. Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 29 June 1965, ibid.

[689] McIlwaine to Darden, 16 March 1965, Box 3, Folder 8, Series I, PEFSA Papers, VSU; Earl McClenney to F.D.G. Ribble, 20 April 1965, Box 3, Folder 9, ibid; Robert Daniel to Robert Musselman, Assistant Treasurer, PEFSA, 5 May 1965, Box 3, Folder 10, ibid.

Nancy Adams noted in October 1964 that the reopened public school system "far surpasses my worst fears." Despite crowded conditions, School Board members refused to open any buildings beyond the four used for the Free Schools and ridiculed a parental request for a special education program as a "stupid" idea. When a delegation from Citizens for Public Education (then called Concerned Citizens for Public Education) offered its services to McIlwaine, he rebuffed them on the grounds that administrators saw no special needs or deficiencies in the student body. One guidance counselor, one remedial reading teacher, one nurse, and one special education teacher served a student population of 1500 – all serving one year appointments purchased with funds specifically designated by the Free School trustees. A high teacher-student ratio – 1: 40 in the elementary schools and 1:30 at Moton High – further intensified problems. With the exception of the seven whites who attended the Free Schools – Letitia Tew, George and Brenda Abernathy, and Thomas, Betty Jo, Edith Ann, and James Lewis (Dickie Moss graduated in 1964) – the student body was entirely black. Enrollment at the Academy remained at its 1963-64 level. Adams noted in frustration that:

> They [school authorities] refuse to recognize that special needs exist in a community where 80% of the children have missed one to four years of school and over 50% missed the entire four years – or – they recognize that the children have been educationally handicapped, but feel that it is the inevitable and just punishment for subjecting the county to a long and costly lawsuit.[690]

Despite an absentee rate of one-fifth to one-third of the student population, McIlwaine repeatedly refused to encourage the School Board to pursue implementation of a county compulsory education law. C.G.G. Moss charged that both the Board and the

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[690] Nancy Adams, "Summary – Prince Edward Public Schools," 14 October 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38574, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "Prince Edward Private Schools Have 1239 Pupils," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 3 September 1964, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

superintendent refused to support such a measure because they secretly hoped for a high dropout rate, which would ostensibly demonstrate "what they would call the lack of Negro interest in education." Though securing the services of only one-third of the necessary faculty by July 22, McIlwaine refused to advertise in national education journals or with any national teachers' associations, explaining that he had no desire to engage "a lot of outside troublemakers." All county officials, School Board members, and school administrators with young children continued to send their own offspring to the Academy. Insufficient funds for food services ensured that the cafeterias ran out of food and milk on a daily basis. When workers in the Worsham School cafeteria suggested that rust on the kitchen sink might be infecting the food served to students, administrators informed them that the budget lacked the funds necessary to replace it. The stripped-down curriculum offered only one foreign language – French – and discontinued the art, dance, journalism, speech and drama electives offered under the Free Schools.[691]

Teachers forbade elementary children to take their books home and some of the newly hired white instructors called their students "niggers" or made derogatory remarks about the "gap between the nigra and white children." During the hiring process, administrators required potential white teachers to vow that they came to Farmville only to teach, not to involve themselves in civil rights causes or foment disruption in the community. Susan Ferris, a white English teacher who actively participated in the life of

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[691] Clyde C. Clements, Jr., "Less Than a Full Measure: The Resumption of Public Schooling in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1964-65," *Xavier University Studies: A Journal of Critical and Creative Scholarship*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1966): 46-53; Adams, "Summary – Prince Edward Public Schools," 14 October 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38574, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Ferris statement, ibid.

the black community and involved herself with the campaign to improve public education, becoming friendly with Nancy Adams and participating in a local Selma Sympathy March, paid the price for disregarding this rule. School officials informed Ferris at the end of the 1964-65 school year that her contract would not be renewed due to her "unacceptable activities." [692]

The situation at Moton High, where half the faculty lacked the appropriate certification to teach in Virginia, proved especially dire. Administrators crammed extracurriculars activities into the last twenty minutes of the school day and offered no after-school activities. As late as October, teachers had no contact with Bryant Harper, the new Superintendent of Classroom Instruction. Ferris, an idealistic young Smith College graduate who took summer classes to attain certification came to Moton fresh from the world of the New England private school. Initially horrified to discover that no one in the English department possessed any previous experience teaching English, she soon learned that only a few of her colleagues possessed any teaching experience at all. When teachers reported for work, administrators provided them no set curriculum or established procedure for ordering textbooks. Instead, they instructed faculty members to sort through a pile of donated Free School textbooks scattered across the floor of the boys' locker room and pick the ones they wanted to use. The enormous pile included textbooks for every subject offered under the Free Schools, and Ferris and another teacher worked for three days just to separate the English materials from books for other subjects.[693]

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[692] Ibid; Adams to S.W. Tucker, 25 May 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

[693] Ferris statement, 1964 Box, Folder 38574, ibid.

The vagaries of the closings produced a severely unbalanced student body breaking down into a small junior and senior class, a mid-sized seventh and tenth grade, and an enormous eighth and ninth grade. Anticipating significant dropout rates, board members refused to order more textbooks to correct the severe shortage at the eighth and ninth grade level. The principal gloomily predicted that 75% of the returning students would not make it to graduation. Refusing to continue the Free Schools' nongraded system, administrators sloppily sorted students into grade levels. While some pupils burned with shame at being placed with children years younger than themselves, others battled boredom in classes that moved too slowly. As Ferris noted:

> The non-reader all the way up to the ninth grade readers are all in the eighth grade. Obviously, the ninth grade reader is very bored with someone who can't read 'of' on the page. And they stumble and stumble and hold up the whole class. It's impossible to hold an orderly class! It's nearly impossible to teach in such a situation.

As late as October, lacking a curriculum to direct them, teachers fumbled along doing whatever seemed most worthwhile to them. Some drilled the students on spelling every day. Others read stories aloud to pass the time. None possessed any specialized knowledge in helping fumbling readers, but with only one remedial reading specialist to serve the entire district, classroom teachers struggled to teach the fundamentals.[694]

"This is a highly paid skill in most school systems," Ferris sadly commented. "It takes a lot of special preparation for this kind of work. None of us have that kind of preparation…I just tried to find some readers and when a child stumbles over a word, I say it out loud…That's not the way to teach a person how to read." A feeling of hopelessness and a culture of passing students on without really teaching them anything

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[694] Ibid; Bob Smith, "County's Crippled Generation," *Southern Education Report*, Vol. 2, No 1 (July/August 1966): 13-16.

permeated the school. "I don't think that any one of these teachers is maliciously, intentionally trying to deprive a child of his education," Ferris reflected. "It's rather that he's not equipped to handle this kind of situation, doesn't have the educational background, doesn't have the skill of how to start a whole curriculum on his own."[695]

Students, particularly those who possessed experiences outside the county to draw upon, recognized that the School Board had thrown them to the wolves. A senior interested in applying to Longwood to challenge the school's all-white policy noted in frustration that the guidance counselor, who tried to talk her out of the decision, provided more discouragement than encouragement. Many students complained that teachers rarely collected homework assignments and that spent inordinate amounts of classroom time on non-academic matters. One of the former placement students noted that her geometry teacher spent fifteen to thirty minutes calling the roll each day, acerbically commenting that, "I think [he] is more concerned with seeing if you're present than teaching you anything. And I really don't know why he'd be concerned with having you present because he certainly isn't going to teach anything." A sophomore boy testified that two of his teachers called the roll two or three times a day and let the students talk for over half the class period, while they read the chapter to be discussed.[696]

A junior noted in frustration that "the last six weeks, instead of going ahead, I've been going backward. I don't think he [a teacher] knows anything more about the book than what we would know about the book if we had read it before him." Many noticed that the teachers possessed little idea of how to help the most disadvantaged students and

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[695] Ferris statement to AFSC, 1964 Box, Folder 38574, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[696] Student statement to AFSC, 7 October 1964, ibid; Student statement to AFSC, 4 October 1964, ibid; Student statement to AFSC, 1 October 1964, ibid.

feared that they would be permanently left behind. Others resented the fact that instructors shied away from discussing potentially controversial topics such as slavery and civil rights, even within the context of a government class. Much to the irritation of some of his students, one of the English teachers spent class time telling students about his experiences in the army and offering suggestions on how to cheat on college exams and make it through school without working. His hostility toward whites bothered others, who noted that he treated the white students with disrespect, referring to them as "poor white trash." Most resented his admission that "he had spent the entire summer running around trying to find someone to hire him," suggesting as it did that Moton High was a last resort for those unable to secure other employment. One of his students, a placement program veteran, noted that, "If I can't respect him as a man, I would at least like to have the opportunity to respect him while I'm in the classroom. But the things he says, I really have little respect for him as a teacher."[697]

Many found the chaos unbearable, predicting that the halls might turn violent if conditions did not improve. One girl charged that:

> Everybody goes around like their heads are chopped off...the students seem to be so wild. Like they don't have no self-control. Last year, the school was cool, calm, and collected. But since this public school has opened up, they can do what they want to.

Many teachers allowed students to wander in and out of the classroom at will, and the enormous frustration of the older teenagers made the school a powder keg. Looking beyond the weaknesses of the faculty, many of the activist students laid blame for the

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[697] Student statement to AFSC, 1 October 1964, ibid; Student statement to AFSC, 4 October 1964, ibid.

situation at the feet of the superintendent and School Board, noting that "they're the cause of us having the faculty we do." A particularly astute junior commented that:

> The teachers they've given us this year, they picked them from the bottom of the list – they gave us any old teachers. They should have given us the best, but we wind up with the worst...They could have given us much better schools and teachers, if they wanted to. But what they want to do is get these kids on out of school without much education and put more in. They just want cheap labor.[698]

When a group of Longwood students volunteered to organize and run a remedial reading project, upper-echelon school administrators, namely McIlwaine and Harper, threw obstacle after obstacle into their path. Hired in 1964 to phase into the Superintendent of Schools position upon McIlwaine's end-of-year retirement, Bryant Harper quickly disappointed any observers hoping the new superintendent would demonstrate signs of being a more independent thinker than his predecessor. A Hampden-Sydney graduate who hailed from Harry Byrd's native Winchester and sent his own son to the Academy, Harper's handling of the remedial reading project foreshadowed later clashes with the black community. His decision to reside in an all-white neighborhood and attend a segregated church, not to mention his propensity to publicly disparage the county's black students as nearly hopeless, erected unbridgeable walls between school administrators and parents from his first days in the county.[699]

His treatment of the Longwood plan, however, revealed the true depth of his determination to obstruct any plans to improve the status quo in the schools. The Longwood students initially proposed an after school program, but when the Moton High

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[698] Student statement 7 October 1964, ibid; Student statement, 1 October 1964, ibid; Student statement, 1 October 1964, ibid.

[699] "Prince Edward Names York Man to School Post," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 14 July 1964; Wolters, p. 117.

principal requested that Harper and McIlwaine allow the tutors the use a school bus for transportation so long as they arranged to pay for gas, oil and a driver, the superintendents explained that the buses were too old. When Father Reikowski, the local Catholic priest, offered the students the use of a car, thus allowing them to come after school to tutor children who could arrange for their own transportation, Harper and McIlwaine announced that school buildings would have to close a half hour after the end of classes in order to avoid paying for extra janitorial services.[700]

The Longwood group then proposed to conduct the program during the school day and draw participants out of study halls and English classes. Moton principal Alfred Hosley supported the plan, reminding the superintendents that the majority of Moton eighth and ninth graders were reading at well below a third grade level, rendering English class and confusing and counter-productive experience. In the wake of Principal Hosley's endorsement, the administrators finally issued reluctant permission for the program to commence. The girls threw themselves into planning, organizing four orientation meetings: one with L.F. Griffin on the general situation in the schools, one with reading specialist Katherine Whittaker on principles of remedial reading, one with Moton English teacher Susan Ferris on methods proven successful in her class, and one with Adams on getting along with people of another race. In the wake of these sessions, they sent a delegation to Lankford to brief him on the program. Unhappy with the prospect of his students going into the public schools, the Longwood president called

[700] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1965, ibid.

Harper, who subsequently berated Hosley for not explicitly spelling out the program's intention to operate on a daily basis.[701]

When the students next visited Harper and McIlwaine, the Assistant Superintendent agreed to consider accepting their services only on the condition that they serve as classroom helpers rather than one-on-one reading specialists. The Moton faculty balked at this proposal, arguing that a mid-year addition of untrained helpers would further increase chaos. Never one to provide school authorities the benefit of the doubt, Nancy Adams suspected that the superintendents anticipated such a reaction, deliberately proposing the reorientation in order to pass the buck by manipulating the teachers themselves into vetoing the program. Harper further demanded that the students provide him a list of the tutors' names, majors, and parents' names and addresses to be contacted to obtain permission for participation. Incensed by this paternalism, the prospective tutors promptly submitting a list of their names and majors but refused to include their parents' contact information.[702]

Almost immediately, however, the superintendents invented a new obstacle. Citing scheduling problems, they announced a two month delay in getting the program off the ground. When the students themselves scheduled the whole program in one meeting, McIlwaine and Harper complained to Lankford that the entire project should be nixed on the grounds that the students were "taking over the school system." On the day before Christmas break, participants received a note informing them that permission for

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[701] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1965, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, ibid.

[702] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, ibid.

the program had been rescinded pending their appearance before a January meeting of the School Board and the submission of a personality sketch from each tutor. By this time, the delaying tactics had successfully reduced interest in the program from fifty students to twenty, but the remaining faithful nonetheless carefully prepared a presentation for Board members.[703]

At the meeting, Board members self-righteously declared that late submission of the personality sketches indicated a lack of responsibility on part of the students. Feigning unfamiliarity with Nancy Adams, they asked the girls many irrelevant questions about her identity, affiliations and living quarters. Two days later, attendees received a letter stating that the "small classes" and "excellence of the teachers" at Moton rendered the efforts involved in administering a tutorial program unnecessary. Harper stated publicly that "we know that untrained people trying to teach reading can often do more harm than good," blatantly ignoring the fact that the Longwood students were not "untrained people," but rather the next generation of Virginia teachers. His remarks utterly failed to acknowledge the acceptance of a tutoring proposal offered by less well-trained (in terms of educational pedagogy) Hampden-Sydney men. Several adult supporters of the Longwood project avowed that school officials privately admitted the real reason for the denial: Board members simply could not accept the idea of young white women working closely with black teenage boys. Though placed in the seventh and eighth grade, the majority of the severely disadvantaged readers topped the age of sixteen. Again demonstrating a command of the timing most guaranteed to ensure delay and frustration, the Board sent the letter during the students' "dead week," ensuring that

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[703] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1965, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 18 January 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

college policy would bind them from responding until after exams and vacation. Though Longwood students continued to participate in FSSS and invite Adams to address their sororities and student organizations, the failure of the tutorial program effectively ended organized activity on campus.[704]

A Court Decision Is Not Enough: Community Action Work

The tragic conditions in the schools and the longevity of the Academy proved what AFSC staff suspected all along, that a court decision alone would not turn the tide in Prince Edward County. S.W. Tucker and Henry Marsh continued to play an important role in the struggle after 1964, filing motions, threatening injunctions, and preparing new cases to challenge the tuition grant program that shielded the majority of white parents from the harmful effects of starving the public school budget. But their efforts focused on the big picture: destroying the legal basis for segregation and discrimination across the state. As human relations workers, AFSC staff pursued a different, though complementary, goal – burying Jim Crow through changing the patterns that governed interracial interaction in Prince Edward County.

Mending splintered relationships and cultivating an authentic sense of justice that would eventually transcend racial hostilities demanded real community relations work among black and white citizens alike. Under Nancy Adams, the Community Relations Program turned the majority of its energies toward building an interracial coalition to demand improvements in the public schools and encouraging white parents to abandon

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[704] Ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Susan Jacoby, "Prince Edward County: Back Where They Started," *Washington Post POTOMAC*, 24 March 1968: 22-23, 27-28, 31.

private education. Helen Baker noted in the fall of 1964 that "Prince Edward County may at this time be undergoing its most critical period, when not only education for Negro children is at stake, but good public schools are in grave danger of being crippled by an extension of the private school idea." Acknowledging that AFSC did not relish the idea of playing "nursemaid" to a community, she nonetheless argued that the organization had served as the one consistent "positive agent in attempting to bring this whole community to a successful resolution of its educational problem." With assistance from both Baker and Adams, a group of black adults calling themselves the Concerned Citizens for Public Education (CCPE) quickly coalesced in April 1964. Devoting themselves to studying the operations of the Free Schools and educating themselves about the proposed public school plans, the original members voted in June to extend membership to interested whites. Several of the leading moderates immediately accepted the invitation.[705]

Members disseminated a fact sheet advertising the organization's purpose as "fostering and promoting good citizenship through informed and responsible participation in the total life of our community." They announced four aims: 1) Learning to define what constitutes good public education; 2) Becoming aware of the actual quality of education in Prince Edward County and its availability to all citizens; 3) Contributing to the continued improvement of public education in the county; and 4) Making known to the community the positive values of a strong public education system. Determined not

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[705] Adams to Fairfax, 31 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 29 June 1964, ibid; Baker to Fairfax, 2 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 39256, ibid.

to become merely another anemic "protest organization," the group immediately took concrete steps to pursue its aims.[706]

The following month, forty-seven CCPE members met with McIlwaine and Harper, who became highly annoyed when the group asked detailed questions about school financing. McIlwaine rudely informed the wife of the Longwood librarian that he had already answered a question three times; when she explained that she was merely trying to understand his response, he replied that it did not matter if she understood or not, that how the schools were run was none of the group's business. For his part, Harper told the assembled public education advocates that "he did not consider himself a fish in a goldfish bowl," and that an administrator could not run a decent school system with citizens constantly poking around. Nancy Adams characterized the only positive outcome of the meeting as the palpable horror of the white members, whose shock at the superintendents' cavalier attitude quickly translated into determination to help improve the situation.[707]

CCPE President Warren Scott, a young black farmer from a well-respected family in the Prospect area and Program Committee Chairperson Josephine Thompson, a black fashion designer with YWCA experience who spent years in New York City before returning to the county to marry a widowed farmer, threw themselves into their leadership roles. Scott obtained from Neil Sullivan an itemized list of Free School equipment to be turned over to the public schools and Thompson's committee submitted an extensively researched report to the School Board laying out the group's vision for the

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[706] Citizens Organization for Public Education (COPE) fact sheet, n.d., 1965 Box, Folder 38598, ibid.

[707] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 18 August 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

public school system. Noting that "we feel that it is mandatory that we have an exceptional system of education for the children of Prince Edward County, in view of the fact that they have been denied the advantage of free public education provided by the county for five years," CCPE, which changed its name to Citizens' Organization for Public Education (COPE) in November, sketched out a program continuing the approach taken by the Free Schools.[708]

Members requested five fully trained guidance counselors, fully certified teachers, a well-funded special education program, building improvements, a hot lunch program, and the opening of Farmville High to reduce overcrowding in the existing buildings. They also demanded salaries no lower than the state minimum, a county compulsory attendance law, a school nurse, adequate bus service for the entire student population, free school books, a black history program, and teacher/student ratios of 1:20 on the elementary level, 1:15 in the high school, and 1:10 in the special ed program. When schools opened in September without so much as a nod to these requests, committee members decided to investigate conditions for themselves. Obtaining permission from McIlwaine to visit the four open buildings, committee members conferred with principals about their needs and problems and evaluated the physical conditions of each structure. The five items topping their final list of crisis areas unsurprisingly included: 1) the severe remedial reading problem, especially prevalent in the eighth and ninth grades; 2) high student absentee rates; 3) overcrowding in the elementary schools; 4) bus shortages and

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[708] Fairfax, "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; Josephine Thompson and J. Warren Scott to Neil Sullivan, 22 July 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38573, ibid; Josephine Thompson, Chair, Program Committee, CCPE to Chairman, Prince Edward County School Board, 19 June 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 18 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

lack of transportation for after-school activities; and 5) problems with the hot lunch program.[709]

Members of the school finance committee, chaired by Longwood librarian Charles Butler, a quiet man who abhorred conflict but worked energetically in the academically-oriented tasks he assigned himself, devoted themselves to learning enough about county and public school finances to develop a realistic and conscientious budget for the school system. Half the committee focused on researching the county's taxable income, pinpointing the percentage of tax funds spent on public education, and comparing both to statistics from other counties around the state. The other half perused public school budgets to determine the factors characterizing a quality one, researched the aid to education available from federal and state sources, and compared Prince Edward's budget to those of surrounding counties.[710]

A few months later, the group reorganized itself into three subcommittees: School Resources under the leadership of Josephine Thompson; School Finances under Butler; and County Finances under long-time white dissenter Annie Putney. The Executive Committee included President Carl Walters (white), Vice President Alton Morton (black), Secretary Doris Ward (black), Treasurer Bernel Coles (black), and Publicity Chairman Jerry Williamson (white.) A Hampden-Sydney Professor of Bible, Carl Walters was a native Mississippian who insisted that he could never send his three year

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[709] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1965, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Thompson to Citizens' Organization for Public Education, 27 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38576, ibid.

[710] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1965, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 October 1964, ibid; Fairfax, "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

old son to the Academy. In taking on the presidency of CPE, Walters vowed to do what he could to benefit his son and the other children of the county in the three years remaining before Jeffrey reached school age.[711]

Alton Morton, the father of five small children, was a Virginia State graduate who taught in the public schools; Doris Ward, a nurse with children in the public schools; and Williamson a Hampden-Sydney English professor converted to activism during a year-long appointment at Mississippi's Millsaps College. Williamson and his wife previously volunteered to teach art and music at the public schools, but the School Board unsurprisingly rebuffed their offer. Jean Fairfax described Bernel Coles, a Farmville grocer, as "not educated, but perhaps the wisest man on the committee." Before the schools closed, Coles regularly rewarded black students for good report cards with quarters and compliments. Vonita White Foster later recalled that:

> I looked forward to the quarters, but as I grew older, I just wanted him to be proud of me, like I wanted my parents to be proud. Soon the quarters didn't really matter. Mr. Coles inspired me to work extra hard, not because of the money, but because of his words of praise and encouragement.[712]

School Resources Committee members included Mrs. Charles Butler, (the librarian's wife) a white Yankee in her sixties who lived next door to a member of the Wall family, and Mrs. Warren Scott, a young black woman with three children, widely recognized as the first African American employed at the local Safeway grocery store. Ruth Field and Robin Walters comprised the Hampden-Sydney contingent of the

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[711] Fairfax, "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

[712] Fairfax, "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; Foster and Foster, *Silent Trumpets of Justice*, p. 53.

committee. Field, the wife of the college chaplain, was a native Virginian who substituted in the public school system and whose paternalist views on race often constituted a "lodestone" for her more open-minded husband. Robin Walters (Carl Walters' wife), a college educated Mississippian, at times feared the repercussions of her husband's activities on her friendship with segregationists, but agreed to enroll three year old Jeffrey in the county's first interracial nursery school, an informal affair ran out of another Hampden-Sydney wife's backyard.[713]

Althea Jones, a black woman in her eighties who provided lifelong support for civil rights reform, raised seven children who all left Prince Edward County in search of greater opportunities, and served as an assistant supervisor in one of the training centers, also served on the committee. Cula Berryman, a black housewife with six children in the public schools, who also served as a training center assistant supervisor and Moton High teacher Susan Ferris added younger voices to the group. Jean White, a quiet but fiercely determined native Mississippian married to a Longwood professor, constituted the final member. White, who eventually became Nancy Adams's right-hand woman, decided after much internal conflict to enroll her oldest child at the Academy for 1964-65. Her own guilt over the decision propelled her even more fervently into CPE work in hopes of achieving some real desegregation in the public schools and sending her son the following year.[714]

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[713] Fairfax, "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

[714] Fairfax, "Types – Citizens Organization for Public Education – Prince Edward County," 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

In contrast to School Resources, membership on the School Finances Committee was more male in composition, including Rev. Griffin, Bernel Coles, Alton Morton, and Tyler Miller, a Hampden-Sydney chemistry professor whose father served as president of Madison College in Harrisonburg (now James Madison University). Miller's family possessed an enviable web of political connections around the state, and Jean Fairfax once described him as a "very sensible, too (!) moderate man." Other Hampden-Sydney members included Dr. Allen, an elderly philosophy professor who possessed a nervous condition that made him uncomfortable in large groups but who worked hard on his committee assignments, and Rev. Arthur Field. A Presbyterian minister who served Hampden-Sydney's College Church, Field found himself constantly handicapped and frustrated by his wife's racial attitudes and his congregation's conservatism.[715]

The County Finances Committee was of mixed gender, comprised of C.G.G. Moss, Warren Scott, Carl Walters, Etta Lee, a young black woman with three sons in the public school system, who worked as a nurse in the neighboring Burkeville Sanitarium, and Pearl Madden, a retired teacher in her eighties and mother-in-law of the county's only black physician. Other members who did not serve on standing committees included Dr. and Mrs. Marvin Schlegel, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Clower of Hampden-Sydney, Viola Neal, known as the most outspoken black person in Green Bay, Mildred Patterson, a quiet woman with children in the public school system, and the paternalist Dr. and Mrs. Frank Crawford. Not all CPE members exhibited militant determination in the support of their cause; some remained quite fearful of bucking the status quo or jeopardizing their position in the community. Not all proved capable of disassociating

[715] Ibid.

themselves from ingrained racial prejudice and paternalist tendencies; some tested their black compatriots' patience on a regular basis. Most of the white members with school age children sent them to the Academy. But all did embrace the goals of building a quality public school system and expanding educational opportunities for all the county's children. Many went further, committing themselves to making desegregation a reality through building a school system that whites would embrace.[716]

Although the most confrontational, CPE was not the only interracial group to emerge in Prince Edward in the spring of 1964. Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Field, one of College Church's Bible study groups turned its attention to the topic of Christian Social Responsibility. Immediately tripling in size, the group, at Field's suggestion, invited black citizens to join. Often described as a conservative southern gentleman, as both a citizen and a Christian minister, Field nonetheless felt a keen responsibility to "stimulate moderate community action" on racial issues. As the first white minister in the county to even suggest that the controversy over the schools invited a discussion of Christian social ethics, Field's moderate actions quickly became a lightning rod for controversy. Prior to charting a new direction for the study group, as president of the county Ministerial Association, Field's efforts to convince the all-white Association to draft a statement concerning the reopening of the schools and explore the possibility of meeting as an interracial ministerial group met only dead ends. A later invitation to all county ministers (white and black) to lunch at the college as guests of the eight ministers on the faculty proved slightly more successful. Nine blacks and two whites – Hoge Smith of Farmville Presbyterian and Otis McClung of Farmville Baptist – attended. In

[716] Ibid.

May, Field invited Neil Sullivan to deliver an address on "The Non-Graded System" to an interracial audience in the campus's Johns Auditorium. No one complained and Field was heartened to note that Roy Moore, an ardent segregationist and member of both the county School Board and College Church, remained after the program to talk with Sullivan – his first contact with the Free Schools.[717]

Some members of College Church grumbled when the Christian Social Responsibility group invited blacks into the building for meetings, but support from H-SC President Taylor Reveley shored up the minister's position. The biweekly meetings, which generally drew ten to twenty people and centered around discussion of chapters from Kyle Haselden's *The Racial Problem in Christian Perspective*, ranged from thought-provoking to counter-productive. On good nights, the majority of attendees spoke and the discussion successfully rendered abstract issues concrete through linking them to specific issues within the county. On bad ones, attendees qualified Haselden to the point that his words lost all power, the large ministerial contingent took off on intricate theological debates, intimidating others into silence, and black members sat mutely. Only particularly bad ones, whites and blacks grouped themselves in such ways that they had no communication with each other, and white attendees spoke rudely and condescendingly to black members. On one particularly memorable evening, the attendance of the local Catholic priest sparked what Adams termed a "verbal reincarnation of the Protestant Reformation." Made to feel extremely unwelcome, the priest – ironically the leader of the county's only interracial congregation – did not speak all evening. That same night, during a discussion of the author's analogy that Moses

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[717] Adams to Fairfax, 20 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, ibid.

could be considered an outside agitator, Ruth Field not-so-subtly labeled Nancy Adams a carpetbagger and outside agitator.[718]

In mid-April the group drafted a statement of purpose and mailed it out to local white ministers. Members suggested that each church in the county (white and black alike) appoint two representatives, along with its pastor, to join the group for the purpose of meeting for "prayer and discussion" about the racial situation and providing "a means for building mutual understanding between people of varied viewpoints." Stressing the religious nature of the body – "the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has a distinctive power as a reconciling force" – its commitment to incorporating multiple viewpoints, and the fact that it would not be used to exert pressure for any already existing program, the statement encouraged recipients to become part of this "rich opportunity for progress." Well aware of the eternal question of authority, it assured members that it would not speak "for" any churches or for the county as a whole, but only "to" them.[719]

Despite these assurances, the letter created a stir, precipitating a meeting between several white ministers, namely Field, McClung, and Smith, and power group members Barrye Wall, Mayor Herbert Stokes, John Steck, and other Supervisors. Entering the meeting, Field possessed hopes of bringing these county leaders into the discussion. After several hours of attempting to dispel rumors that the group planned demonstrations, served the bidding of forces outside the county, and advocated integration, however, he emerged pleased simply to have gained tacit acceptance. Explaining that they themselves

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[718] Adams to Fairfax, 17 April 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 6 July 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax 2 June 1964, ibid.

[719] Field Group Statement, Attachment A, Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 29 June 1964, ibid.

could not attend "because of their position," but that they were happy to see the group continue, the leaders' acceptance removed the stigma of radicalism from the endeavor. Advertising this "stamp of approval," Field sent out another letter encouraging church members to pray for the group's meetings and come to participate.[720]

By and large, Nancy Adams' two major concerns with the body - which for all its faults she found more promising than Moss's old "biracial" committee - were its penchant for discussion over action and its unpredictable treatment of black attendees. At her urging, a sub-group interested in concrete action agreed to meet separately from the parent organization. Meetings, however, demonstrated that the members – two blacks and five to eight college-affiliated whites – might be willing to think about action, but were not ready to take it. When Griffin proposed in early May that white members pay individual calls on the Supervisors, the group demurred on the grounds that nothing could be accomplished until the Supreme Court issued its ruling. When Adams suggested that the group attend the Supervisors' budget hearing en masse, members protested that such an action would be futile, as the authorities' course of action was already set.[721]

When she proposed that they do some soul-searching with their friends about the possibility of sending their children to the public school system, Ruth Field opined that "everyone was already thinking about it seriously," and the rest of the group concurred that no one would be ready to make such a commitment so early. However, it finally agreed to authorize Field, Griffin, and Tyler Miller, whose family connections served him

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[720] Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, ibid; Field Group Statement Attachment B, Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 29 June 1964, ibid.

[721] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 29 June 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, ibid.

well, to visit Colgate Darden and encourage him to use his prestige to draw attention to the situation. Darden, however, offered his help if county officials should request it, but refused to promise anything else.[722]

Ultimately, the group's attempt to straddle the fence paralyzed its ability to act. Members desired quality public schools, but at the same time supported indeterminate continuation of tuition grants and the Academy to provide a "cooling off period" and offer opportunities to move toward gradual, voluntary desegregation. Field and Miller proposed postponing the question of integration and focusing exclusively on securing good public schools, questioning Griffin as to whether the African American community would accept excellent all-black schools for a year or two, then a 70% white/30% black building, and so forth. Even Moss noted that "idealistically it stinks, but realistically, I think all we can do is plug for a decent public school and postpone integration." Ruth Field moved the discussion even further backward when she suggested that "four or five nigra children" who wanted a particular Academy class be sent to the private school for one period a day. Questioning Griffin as to whether he was sure he wanted to remove his "darling" children from the "security of a Negro school" and subject them to the indignations of an integrated facility, she turned the clock back to desegregation being a question for debate rather than the law of the land.[723]

Griffin threw up his hands, convinced that Field and Miller had completely sold out and accepted an order from the power group to feel out his feelings on such an arrangement. Adams remained more hopeful, believing instead that their meeting with

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[722] Ibid.

[723] Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, ibid.

"leading lights" subjected them to so much defiant rhetoric that they ultimately succumbed to the pessimistic view that desegregation could not be attempted at the present time, but that conditions might improve in a few years. Nevertheless, both activists lamented this sense of hopelessness and futility. As Adams noted, "This group will do anything to help the Negroes get good public schools. The gentlemen 'believe in' desegregation, but feel it is 'idealistic and unworkable' at this time. They will prepare to work for desegregated schools in a year or two." Ultimately, the subcommittee disbanded and its' more determined members drifted into CPE, where predilection to action proved more pronounced and the even balance between blacks and whites helped many adopt a more progressive stance.[724]

Other members drifted back into the larger discussion-oriented group, which continued to respond to Haselden's question of "What can we as individuals do to act out our beliefs on the subject of race relations?" with the answer that individuals could do little to change the situation in the county. Despite this moderation, however, when Bill Wall attended a meeting of the group to report on it in the *Farmville Herald*, his portrayal misquoted and misrepresented the discussion, spurring Field to write a letter to the editor refuting the story. Nancy Adams despaired that the younger and more militant black members ceased attendance altogether, leaving the group a mere "forum for whites and more moderate, generally older Negro members to meet together and discuss the theoretical Christian position on race." Nevertheless, continuing to believe that the group

[724] Ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 2 June 1964, ibid; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 8 October 1964, ibid.

played a role of some value for its attendees. Adams continued to participate, often offering suggestions for taking steps toward action.[725]

In late June 1964, the College Church Session (church governance board) held an acrimonious meeting in which a member asked Field "if you're so damn anxious to integrate everything, why don't you send your kids to the public school?" The question of their son's schooling constituted a sore point for the Field family, and the minister deemed the hostile question a low blow. In September, Ruth Field admitted to Adams that her husband wanted to send their son to Moton, but she could not bear the idea of subjecting him to classes with such academically challenged students. Given her history of racially insulting remarks and generally low opinion of the public school system and its student body, it is reasonable to question whether academic standards constituted her only concern. Nevertheless, her confession that "if we could just select the Negroes who would go to school," further fueled Adams' determination not to allow the "liberal" line to descend to integrating whites and middle-class blacks and re-segregating the remainder of the African American community.[726]

After the pastor read a statement declaring that he would be forced to resign if the session voted to bar anyone from entrance to the church, one of the members rejoined, "Well, maybe you should." After three hours of debate, the Session voted not to allow the Christian Social Responsibility Group to continue meeting in the College Church basement. The group relocated to the Hampden-Sydney Parents and Friends Lounge, but

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[725] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 6 July 1964, ibid; Adams to Bucklin and Miller 8 October 1964; Update Report, "AFSC Work in Prince Edward County, Virginia," October 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38572.

[726] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 6 July 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, ibid.

observers noted that the fracas toned down sympathetic members of the congregation and constrained the pastor. During the second meeting in the lounge, ardent segregationist Ray Moore, who attended three previous sessions without speaking, volunteered to lead the discussion. Explaining that he preferred to pronounce Haselden's name as "Hassel-dean," as he obviously served as the Dean of a Communist hassle to destroy the United States, Moore launched into a long litany of personal experiences which he believed offered "proof" of black inferiority. Accusing the professorial contingent of living on "cloud nine" and the black members of being "prejudiced against whites because they are superior to you," he vowed that he would never "get down into the gutter with niggers." Adams noted that this diatribe encouraged many black members to comment and pushed white members a little further outside their comfort zone than usual by forcing them to argue against these statements, but ultimately rendered the evening a waste. Moore enjoyed the debate but never wavered in his opinions, and she feared that the opportunity to argue and vent did not outweigh "the damage done to the feelings and emotions involved."[727]

In early September, Tyler Miller suggested that the group consider the question of whether, in its present makeup, it had outlasted its usefulness and should refocus, disband, or continue in present form. A month later, after a lengthy discussion, members voted to accept Moss's suggestion to incorporate as the Prince Edward Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relation. The decision pleased Adams, who noted that "this illustrates movement, although I'm sure they don't realize that yet." Hoping that the link with other councils across the state would provide the group new insights, new

[727] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 6 July 1964, ibid; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 8 October 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, ibid.

encouragement and an increased sense of legitimacy in the community, she termed the decision "a healthy step forward." Members quickly elected Longwood historian Marvin Schlegel president and, keeping to its identity, the group embarked on a series of monthly discussion programs. Preferring to devote her time to the action-oriented CPE and convinced that the group would go no further, Adams retained membership, but withdrew from a leadership role. Ultimately, however, the group did take on one big project. When the War on Poverty came to Prince Edward the following year, the prospect of federal funds, opportunity to sponsor a program unopposed by the white leadership, and increased connections and resources provided by affiliation finally stirred the VCHR chapter to take some action.[728]

Aware that not every potential rebel in town would patiently bear with the Field group or affiliate with the largely middle-class CPE, Adams also sponsored a series of "Community Unity" meetings in the black community, based on her AFSC colleague Thelma Babbitt's 1959-1960 community relations work in Little Rock.[729] These thirteen conferences, which took part in various sections of the county throughout the fall of 1964, consisted of a short speech focused on dispelling the notion that "everything is okay now that the schools have reopened," arousing interest and concern about the poor conditions in the schools and encouraging citizen involvement, followed by a large communal dinner. Estimating that approximately 380 residents who did not affiliate with any of the previously mentioned groups participated in these meetings, Adams drew

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[728] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 October 1964, ibid; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1965, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593.

[729] For more on Thelma Babbitt's work in Little Rock, see Lynn, p. 78-79.

encouragement from a subsequent upswing in PTA participation. The new activists' choice of organizations with which to affiliate, however, worried her. She considered the PTA poorly organized and constantly fractured by divisions between dissatisfied parents and teachers who, dependent upon their jobs, echoed the party line and defended the system. Dr. Moss echoed her concerns about teachers' allegiance to the party line, charging that with no tenure and warnings to avoid political activity ringing in their ears, public school employees were "afraid to open their mouths even when they are talking to a friendly person." Both doubted the organization's potential to provide an effective platform for incorporating these new voices into the movement.[730]

Nonetheless, Adams took great delight in the tenor of the November PTA meeting, which featured McIlwaine and Harper as guest attendees. McIlwaine opened the evening by castigating parents for "not taking an interest in the schools" and doing something to correct the absentee program, but he no sooner sat down than the meeting exploded. One mother demanded to know why, if the superintendent really worried so much over the absentee problem, the board refused to support a compulsory attendance law. Deeming his answer insufficient, another man jumped to his feet to ask why McIlwaine did not recommend the adoption of such a regulation. In rapid fire order, other attendees fired off questions and criticisms regarding the decrepit buses, the remedial reading problem, the absence of a late bus, the lack of adequate physical education facilities, the free lunch program, the poor salaries of the cafeteria workers, and

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[730] Adams to Fairfax, 20 March 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 October 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, ibid; Clyde C. Clements, Jr., "Less Than a Full Measure: The Resumption of Public Schooling in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1964-65," *Xavier University Studies: A Journal of Critical and Creative Scholarship*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1966): 46-53.

the conditions in the cafeterias themselves. When the PTA president, a young minister who was himself a CPE member, attempted to adjourn the meeting. attendees refused to retire quietly. Adams marveled:

> It was absolutely invigorating to see these people on their feet and literally screaming at Mr. Harper and Mr. McIlwaine. It was, of course, unorganized, many pronged, we had no direction to the attack, it was completely unsolicited, yet, it was of the people and out of their own frustration...I am, therefore, more than ever convinced that there is a tremendous strength in the Negro community. I do not think there has ever been a real, all-out effort to reach these people and to present the issues to them and to let them know what specifically they can do about it. I do think that they can be reached; as ever, I wish I had more time to devote to this sort of project.[731]

From a strategic point of view, CPE remained Adams' top priority, but she and the college students with whom she worked so closely participated actively in a pre-election voter registration drive aimed at further politicizing the black community. On September 25, 1964, Virginia state courts enjoined the "blank paper" registration form used in Prince Edward and many other Southside counties. Though the county already experienced several NAACP-sponsored registration drives, the most recent culminating the previous spring, organizers took advantage of the advent of the simplified form to mount an intensified campaign during the weeks leading up to the 1964 presidential election. Interracial teams canvassed the back roads and transported interested applicants to the registrar's office. Despite these efforts, however, turnout on election day proved fairly poor, and Adams worried that another drive would be necessary to bring those who

[731] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

registered for federal elections only back into town to register for local elections as well.[732]

Nonetheless, carefully documented irregularities in the process provided the fuel for two potential lawsuits, both turned over to S.W. Tucker for consideration. Despite standing in line for hours, county officials denied over two hundred black registrants the opportunity to register by closing the voter registration office closed before their number could be called. Such action constituted an obvious violation of a state statute mandating that applicants who apply before closing time must be registered the same day and made Prince Edward a prime candidate for inclusion in a statewide suit against registrars who refused to register candidates past stated closing hours. Affidavits from two Longwood College students also provided ammunition for a suit alleging preferential treatment of whites. The students, both FSSS members who had registered prior to the September 25th discontinuance of the blank ballot, swore that the registrar did not require them to use the blank form given to black registrants and actually assisted them through the process of filling out the form. Black applicants who registered prior to September 25th, on the other hand, testified that the registrar required them to write the sentence, "I apply to register" on the blank form and subjected them to humiliating questions about being "a pauper, an idiot, an embezzler, insane, etc."[733]

Visible and Confrontational: Citizens for Public Education

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[732] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 16 October 1964, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, ibid.

[733] Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 8 October 1964, ibid; Statement of Constance Jane Birch, 25 September 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38571, ibid.

When Josephine Thompson's School Resources Committee approached McIlwaine requesting permission to visit the padlocked school buildings as well as the open ones, he reacted with hostility, later calling Adams to demand the names and addresses of the committee members. Adams refused to provide a list of addresses, but did give him the names of the ladies who visited his office. A few days later, an agitated Harriet White came into the AFSC office to say that McIlwaine had approached her brother-in-law James White, a teacher in the public system, and informed him that his sister "had better get out of that committee." James White relayed this information to his sister-in-law, urging her to resign from said committee immediately or risk damaging his professional future and her livelihood (she and her husband owned a dry cleaning business). Not currently involved with any school committees, Harriet White could not imagine what McIlwaine had meant. Together, she and Adams deduced that the superintendent had confused her name with that of Jean White. Personally insulted by such a blatant attempt at intimidation, Harriet White joined COPE on the spot, commenting that if Farmville's white-owned cleaners could help distribute tuition grants, she – the mother of five school-age children – could certainly join the public school advocacy group.[734]

In the end, McIlwaine refused to allow Thompson's committee to enter the closed buildings on grounds that bringing an interracial group into the "white" schools, especially Farmville High, only "a stone's throw from Barrye Wall's house," would create unnecessary tension in the community. He did, however, offer to allow the white members access. Though disappointed with this proposal, the committee ultimately

[734] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 18 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

voted to accept it, deeming the opportunity to assess the conditions of the closed buildings more important than making an issue out of the incident. Adams, however, broached the matter with Henry Marsh, who advised COPE to send him a letter officially requesting his firm to write Commonwealth Attorney Watkins to ask his "interpretation" of Virginia laws concerning public facilities. Confident that the merest hint of an NAACP challenge would cause McIlwaine to back down, Marsh assured Adams that gaining admittance for the full committee should be simple.[735]

However, when COPE (which officially changed its name in early 1965 to Citizens for Public Education) placed an ad in the *Farmville Herald* in February 1965 explaining the group's agenda and soliciting new members and white parents interested in sending their children to the public schools, McIlwaine revoked the invitation altogether. Fortunately, prior to the ad's placement, he did allow the committee to examine the blueprints of the white schools, and voiced his personal opinion that only Farmville High (capacity 300-350) and the Rice School (capacity 200) could be considered usable. The knowledge that at least two of the closed buildings could safely house students motivated members to lobby even more forcefully for the expansion of the public system. Although the *Herald* ad created quite a stir, responses proved disappointing in the extreme – only two readers sent postcards expressing interest – and Adams feared that the general membership verged upon sinking into a "rather lethargic state." President Carl Walters feared that the prominence of his name on the ad might cause his wife pain in the form of rejection by her segregationist friends. Jean Fairfax

[735] Ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 28 November 1964, ibid; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 5 January 1964, ibid.

and Mississippi staff members Connie Curry and Winnifred Green sprang into action, gathering messages of encouragement from individuals in his native state whom he respected, which proved invaluable in shoring up his determination.[736]

While action on some fronts lagged in the wake of the disappointing response, members did decide to press forward on their plan to submit to the School Board the report on remedial needs recently completed by the group's subcommittee on remedial reading. Chaired by Harriet White, drawn to the group through a case of mistaken identity, the subcommittee produced a detailed and shocking report. Based on the published results of the Iowa Silent Reading Test, the only standardized test administered to high school students in the 1964-65 school year, the committee argued that the need for intensive remedial work had reached a point of crisis. Citing data stating that the median reading level among Moton eighth graders averaged four years and two months and among ninth graders five years and five months, CPE suggested the existence of a vicious circle of correlation between "educational retardation – lack of adequate remedial programming – school absenteeism – potential and actual dropouts." Noting that 183 students absented themselves the entire month of November, subcommittee members pointed out that 80% of the truant came from the Moton rolls. Parsing the statistic of 145 ninth graders absent from February 3rd to 5th, members demonstrated that eighty-three read at a sixth grade level or below, thirty-six on a seventh or eighth grade level, and only two at a ninth grade level. Pointing to a similar pattern among eighth grade absentees, the subcommittee's report urged School Board members to recognize that the most at-risk

[736] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams to S.W. Tucker, 25 May 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

children frequently cut school due to discouragement, frustration and the lack of any adequate remedial services.[737]

Pointing to a study on reading recently completed by a University of Michigan team, the committee quoted the project director's assertion that 75% of illiterate children can be substantially aided by special attention from non-professionals. Urging the Board to bring in volunteer nonprofessionals as soon as possible to assist the two (thanks to a recent hire) reading specialists on staff, the report tactfully ignored the fact that the study contradicted the grounds upon which administrators had rejected the Longwood tutorial program. Offering to organize its own volunteer program, CPE urged School Board members to join in in asking the Board of Supervisors to sanction the submission of a community request to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) for a poverty grant including a comprehensive long-range program to serve the remedial needs of the county.[738]

When the delegation appointed to present the report arrived at the School Board meeting, they experienced what Adams wryly termed "an amazing demonstration of the democratic process in action Prince Edward style." Members kept the group waiting in the hall for an hour despite an appointment, while they checked the school laws of Virginia to see if the law required them to admit citizens' groups to their meetings. When finally ushered into McIlwaine's small office, the delegation crowded into the small space not filled by furniture. Board members remained seated, yawning and lolling

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[737] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Citizens for Public Education, Report to the Prince Edward County School Board, February 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

[738] Ibid.

back in their chairs, pointedly refusing to offer any of the CPE members, including an eighty year old woman who spent most of the day on a bus returning from an NAACP rally in Baltimore, a place to sit. Despite Carl Walters' conciliatory opening statement that CPE only desired to help and fully understood the difficulty of the Board's job, Vice Chairman Ray Moore immediately launched a line of hostile questioning in regards to the "real" intent of the group. Taking one look at the prepared report, he deemed it far too complicated for discussion and announced that reading it aloud would only waste the Board's time.[739]

When Walters asked for a few minutes to present the conclusions, Moore agreed to allow Josephine Thompson to summarize, but almost immediately interrupted her, asking for a "succinct synopsis." Without missing a beat, Thompson folded her copy of the report, took a deep breath, and summarized the contents with an air of composure that was, in Adams' words, "much to Dr. Moore's surprise, I am sure." Assuring Board members that they would be happy to revise the proposed tutorial program in any manner the Board saw fit and requesting a response within two weeks, members of the delegation shook hands and left. Despite this marginally cordial ending, Adams noted that, "We realized after this meeting that if the group were to make any progress it would have to attempt to reach the general public…confronting the officials of this county was absolutely futile."[740]

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[739] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596, ibid.

[740] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596, ibid.

Agreeing to pattern their efforts after the Mississippians for Public Education, the group brainstormed for ways of getting white parents to return to the public schools as a lever for applying pressure to public officials to upgrade their quality. Recognizing that women often constituted the parent most intimately involved in their children's lives, a ladies' Tea Committee held six teas in the homes of members, members' friends, faculty wives, and individuals connected to the professional community. Each hostess invited her friends and female relatives and CPE members testified to the broad community importance of quality public schools. Attendees, however, responded along the lines of, "yes, we understand, we're glad we heard your message, you go right ahead and I will, of course, keep my child in the Academy where all the white children are and where their friends are." In the wake of the effort, Adams noticed a slight increase in community acceptance of CPE's right to exist, but agreed with Chairperson Jean White's conclusion that the committee accomplished little in continuing to beat its head against a stone wall in attempt to reach this particular segment of the population.[741]

On March 8, members of the two finance subcommittees returned to the School Board to present their report on the financial situation. Armed with a long list of statistics and recommendations, they encouraged more community participation in shaping the district's educational plan and in the operation of the schools. Pointing out that continued black exclusion from decision making would only lead to dissatisfaction in the black community regardless of educational quality, and white resentment of black complaints, regardless of their validity, the report prodded Board members to invest in local black talent by grooming an African American for Board membership. Drawing on

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[741] Ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

extensive research, the presenters effectively demonstrated that Prince Edward County ranked slightly above the state average in wealth per school-age child and could afford a far better school system than the one it presently operated.[742]

Quoting from the Virginia Superintendent's of Public Instruction's annual report, the CPE representatives pointed out that in 1964-65 the county received substantially less aid from federal sources than did most counties in the state and urged members to take advantage of increasing opportunities to attract federal funds for education. Noting that the projected state average expenditure for 1965-66 averaged $373/child, they encouraged the Board to shoot for $425 and settle for no less than $385. The vast majority of CPE members confidently assumed that the Board would not be so cavalier toward a system enrolling more white students. Consequently, they proposed a county-wide census to ascertain the percentage of Academy parents who would seriously consider returning their children to the public schools if a reasonable number of other white children attended and officials established a plan to avoid "massive integration." Having learned that the amount of money allocated by the state in local school funds directly depended upon average daily attendance, they turned again to the problem of absenteeism, once more encouraging the Board to pursue passing a compulsory attendance law.[743]

Board members greeted this group with even greater hostility than the School Resources delegation, keeping the four representatives waiting two hours and forty-five minutes before finally admitting them to the meeting at 11:00 pm. Chairman George

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[742] CPE to Prince Edward County School Board, March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

[743] Ibid; Report of the Committee on School Finances, CPE, 2 March 1965, ibid.

Palmer, the only remaining member of the 1959 School Board, accused the CPE members of attempting to undermine the School Board and cause trouble in the community, going so far as to ask if the group were so interested in education, why it did not work for the benefit of the Academy. When Tyler Miller dryly responded that he was addressing the **public** school Board, Palmer replied that members' duties to the public schools did not prevent them from being "very interested in the Academy." When the delegation asked why it had to date received no response to its February report, Board members laughed, claimed to be very busy and casually promised to respond in writing at their "earliest convenience." When they finally did so in April, it was only to announce that they found CPE's reports time consuming and unnecessary. They rejected the proposed tutorial program on grounds that the prospective volunteers were untrained, and alleged "discrepancies of fact" in the finance report. Both the Board's demeanor and the flippant letter demonstrated yet again that members saw CPE not only as an enemy, but also as an utter waste of time. Lacking enforcement capabilities or leverage over the Board's actions, the citizens' committee did not constitute a viable threat to those who ran the schools.[744]

Perceiving Ray Moore to be the most hostile and racist of the Board members, CPE members from his district called upon him three times at home in an effort to better gauge his ideas and defuse his hostility. The first goal proved an undoubted success, the second an utter failure. Moore explained on the first visit that his medical training convinced him that black inferiority lay in the prevalence of sickle-cell anemia among Africans, and that he had no intention of "pouring more money into a school for inferior

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[744] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, ibid.

human beings." The second visit ended with Moore angrily ordering the visitors to leave and his wife "screeching hysterically" after them. A letter from the doctor demanding that CPE provide him a membership list, a complete financial statement indicating all monetary contributions, and a collection of affidavits to prove that the organization "represented anybody" precipitated the third visit. When the callers explained that they had no intention of furnishing him with such information, he refused to discuss the matter any further, noting that he would not speak with another CPE representative until the organization fulfilled his request.[745]

CPE long cherished the idea of getting an African American or sympathetic white appointed to the School Board, and Moore's actions, in conjunction with the fact that he was up for reappointment in 1965, provided the push necessary to get the ball rolling. In 1960's Virginia, residents did not elect school boards by popular vote. Instead, county circuit court judges appointed a three person School Trustee Electoral Board, which in turn appointed members to four year terms on the county school board. Though bureaucratic in the extreme and rarely influenced by popular opinion, the process did legally require trustees to announce their appointments at an advertised public meeting. Citizens who desired to communicate their support for a particular candidate conveyed their opinions to the trustees prior to the gathering.[746]

Teaming up with Griffin and NAACP members in Moore's Hampden district, CPE members spent three days circulating a petition among parents requesting that the trustees replace the physician with CPE's Tyler Miller, a professional educator and son of

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[745] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, ibid.

[746] CPE, "Basic Information: School Officials and Important Dates," n.d., 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

one of the state's most respected college presidents. Over 90% of residents with children in the public schools – 295 people – signed. A delegation of parents and citizens presented the petition at the trustees' June 21 meeting, but the Electoral Board quickly disregarded the recommendation and reappointed Moore for another term. Organizers of the campaign, however, spread the incident far and wide among the Richmond media, drawing attention to the fact that the trustees blatantly disregarded the stated wish of 90% of patrons of the school system. An editorial in the teenager-produced local newspaper *The VOICE* noted that Moore could not effectively represent "the Negro community or the Hampden-Sydney District so long as he is a fervent supporter of the belief that Negroes are inferior."[747]

Meanwhile, CPE forged ahead with its campaign to reach the rank and file of the white population. As Nancy Adams noted, "We knew there was a public to be reached...every day we heard rumors of families where one child was able to go to school – the rest were kept home. We knew that there was a need, but the problem was how to get to these people." Inspired to undertake the nonbinding and anonymous survey of public opinion that members previously encouraged the school board to conduct, the organization mailed approximately 3500 brochures entitled *A Time to Speak and Act* to every white resident of the county with a listed address. Framing the situation as one of desperation for whites as well as blacks, the brochure highlighted the rising tuition costs at the Academy (now $300 per child), the continued ban on the use of state tuition grants,

[747] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 14 June 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Editorial, *The VOICE,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1965), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

and the heavy drain on the public treasury necessitated by legal fees, upkeep on the closed public school buildings, and the costs of maintaining a dual school system.[748]

Reminding recipients that 49% of county residents earned less than $3000 a year, but that Academy parents paid $574,777 in tuition between 1961 and 1964, the brochure laid out three alternatives for engaging the situation: 1) Do nothing – watch children drop out of the Academy and enter the public schools or slip through the cracks altogether. Accept the fact that as more drop out, tuition for those remaining will increase even more; 2) Massively desegregate the Academy in order to regain the use of tuition grants – token integration will not satisfy the courts – and bear the costs of two integrated school systems; 3) Follow the rest of the state (in 1963, eighty-three of Virginia's 130 school districts experienced some integration) and work out a viable solution. Pleading with residents to recognize that "public education costs less and gives more than private systems," the brochure argued that, "If you send your child to private school, you are paying for that system through tuition fees and for public education through your state and local taxes…why pay twice?"[749]

Taking a lesson from the lack of response to its newspaper ad, CPE enclosed a postcard asking only that recipients return it as a confidential and anonymous indication of interest in enrolling their children in the public schools under conditions that would not involve "massive integration." In framing the issue, the survey designers recognized white parents' wariness to place their children in an all-black environment and

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[748] Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; CPE, *A Time to Speak and Act*, March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

[749] CPE, *A Time to Speak and Act*, March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid.

psychological association of the operating school buildings with "black education." Consequently, they suggested that a base threshold of white interest in the system would stimulate the Board to agree to open one of the former white schools and import in enough black children to render the building genuinely integrated but still predominantly white. Aware that this idea could be viewed as perpetuating segregation, members nonetheless maintained that it constituted the only realistic strategy for bringing whites back into the public school system.[750]

Approximately 150 affirmative replies eventually trickled back into the AFSC office, one of which bore the phrase "Help Us!" scrawled on the bottom. Several residents also phoned Carl Walters to express in confidence that they could not afford Academy tuition and that the brochure created a hopeful stir in their neighborhoods. Former School Board Chairman Calvin Bass called the editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* to urge a favorable editorial on the action, but coverage did not prove forthcoming. Two weeks after the mailing, PESF attorney J. Barrye Wall, Jr. countered CPE's action by issuing a startling statement to the *Times-Dispatch* alleging that the registration forms Academy parents signed in March constituted "completely legal and completely binding contracts." The CPE brochure had assured parents that the signed forms did not bind them to the Academy, leaving them free to enroll their children in the public schools come fall if they desired to do so. Obtaining a copy of the form, used that year for the first time, Adams sent it to three friends on the faculty at UVA School of Law. All concurred that the registration form constituted one of the tightest contractual

[750] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, ibid.

agreements they ever reviewed, possibly obligating parents to pay tuition even if the child in question died prior to September.[751]

Aware that the parents of over 1200 children had signed these forms, CPE's executive committee met with Griffin to devise a response. After much deliberation, the group decided to distribute a letter to parents pointing out the unfair tactics used to bind them to the Academy. Many members agreed only with great reluctance, as CPE studiously avoided what it termed "public negativism," but saw no other recourse. The final draft of the letter, mailed on March 28, queried, "If it was not made clear to you when you registered your child that you were signing a 'perfectly valid and perfectly binding' legal contract which took effect immediately, do you feel that the private school officials were respecting YOUR freedom of choice?" One irate mother, a fairly prominent woman, called to say that Academy officials expressly assured her in the presence of witnesses that the form was not binding and she possessed the right to change her mind if she wished. She joined CPE's tea committee on the spot, but as usual, the majority of whites accepted their leaders' actions without public murmur.[752]

CPE members, on the other hand, turned their attention toward identifying and contacting the 150 people who anonymously responded to the brochure campaign. Under Jean Fairfax's leadership, the AFSC Southern Programs Committee offered to finance a volunteer-staffed door to door survey. Survey Committee co-chairs Nancy Adams and

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[751] Jean White and Nancy Adams, Survey Committee, n.d., 1965 Box, Folder 38594, ibid; CPE, "Open Letter to White Parents of Prince Edward County," n.d., ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

[752] CPE, "Open Letter to White Parents of Prince Edward County," n.d., 1965 Box, Folder 38394, ibid; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

Jean White prepared a survey form and orientation letter for the fifty-some white volunteers, mostly Virginians, who came to Prince Edward throughout the summer of 1965 to scour the rural back roads for potential public school attendees. The volunteers, who included individuals from Friends meetings across the state, the League of Women Voters, the Presbyterian Church, and a Catholic women's organization, visited over 5000 people, covered every road in the county, and identified 130 parents of 247 children willing to consider public school affiliation. The work was difficult and frustrating. Throughout their first week canvassing, Adams and White did not find a single person in the Hampden-Sydney district, outside of the immediate college area, even willing to consider the question.[753]

Before undertaking the survey, CPE members met with Superintendent Harper to feel out the possibility of opening one of the "white buildings." He expressed willingness to unlock either the Rice School or the Green Bay School. When asked about Farmville High – the group's preference – the superintendent explained that the larger building would be too expensive to renovate. Assuring attendees that space problems would soon be a thing of the past, he predicted that the public school system would soon buy the Academy Upper School building and convert it to a "white" elementary school. Explaining that Moton High would remain the "black" high school, he further predicted a new construction project to build a "black" elementary school and a "white" high school from scratch. Recognizing that each building would legally require a modicum of desegregation, he nonetheless insisted that this projected return to a dual public system

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[753] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 14 June 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596, ibid.

would effectively solve the county's education problem. CPE members envisioning genuine integration with just enough white concentration to ease parents' qualms about sending their children recoiled from this overtly segregationist agenda.[754]

Adams noted in frustration that:

> It seems to me likely that the county would be foolish enough to try this final, last ditch effort...The tragedy is that in a community which so desperately needs educational upgrading and remedial work, this county would consider launching a two million dollar building project when they still owe money on Moton High School and are still paying upkeep for the eight closed buildings in the county.

Interestingly enough, the idea actually originated with a group of white merchants who approached Foundation officials in January with a proposal to lease the Upper School building to the public schools and negotiate with the black community (sans Griffin) for a percentage of integration. Officials vetoed the suggestion, but did send students home on the first day of the semester with a questionnaire asking parents to indicate their position on the question of integrating the Academy in order to retain the use of tuition grants. 60% of parents approved token integration under these conditions, 25% disapproved, and 15% indicated ambivalence.[755]

Despite their disapproval of Harper's plan, CPE members did interpret it as an indication that the superintendent would open an additional building if enough white parents expressed interest in returning to the public schools. Noting that over 170 of the 235 children identified in the door to door canvass were elementary age, they tagged this group as sizable enough to spur action. Over a series of August 1965 meetings with this group of parents, which Nancy Adams termed one of the most enlightening and

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[754] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.

[755] Ibid; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 18 January 1965, ibid.

disheartening experiences of her life, CPE learned the fears and concerns of a segment of the population largely forgotten by the power structure. The poorest of the poor, these 130 parents embodied desperation, hostility, and inexorable resentment toward white leaders and African Americans alike. Their response to the survey motivated by panic, they perpetually feared retribution from the power structure for "betraying their color." In Adams' words:

> They were absolutely terrified. At one meeting, they refused to get out of their cars. They hid in their cars, occasionally peering with their eyes at the window level because they had heard that there might be a trap at this meeting. Once in the meeting, they were violently anti-Negro. These people are not in any way sympathetic, but they were desperate. They were willing to put their children in integrated schools simply because they had no schools to go to. They were bitter. They were frightened and they were hostile.[756]

The parents demanded that Harper meet with them in a group and provide assurance that their children would be perpetually surrounded by a cushion of other students. The superintendent refused, requiring instead that the families come in individually to register. He insisted that if enough did, the district would provide a school for their children. The parents, however, resisted, maintaining that they would not register without advance knowledge of the type of school their offspring would attend. Thanks to this policy, only thirty children registered by the end of August. Since thirty new pupils would not necessitate opening another building, participating parents tore up the registration forms and begged CPE not to reveal that they had ever signed them in the first place.[757]

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[756] Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596, ibid.

[757] Ibid.

In June 1965, CPE organized one last mass appearance at the Supervisors' annual budget hearing. In response to the School Board's insufficient request for $380,000 in local funds, CPE and the Moton PTA both presented statements requesting an increase to at least the state median. Echoing previous pleas, they again pointed to the problem of overcrowding, urged the reopening of Farmville High, and encouraged the School Board to seek out additional federal funds. The Supervisors, who when confronted with public education advocates, usually sank into stony silence, for once deigned to engage in some dialogue with attendees. They vigorously insisted that high absentee rates revealed a "lack of initiative" on part of the county's black children, threatening that they would not put any more money into public education until student motivation improved. C.G.G. Moss, Jerry Williamson, Tyler Miller, and others countered this argument with the assertion that the absentee rates were directly attributable to the lack of an effective remedial program, and that investing in special education would quickly resolve the problem.[758]

Near the end of the session, Mrs. Marvin Schlegel rose to make a sincere and moving statement urging the Supervisors to end their bickering and work instead for the betterment of public education. Stung, they reacted with hostility, crying out "whose fault was it in the first place," and launching the group back into the tired finger-pointing debate over ultimate responsibility for the closings. Upon exiting the meeting, even the most optimistic CPE members possessed no realistic hopes of seeing any of their suggestions adopted, but agreed that merely salvaging the proposed budget could be considered a victory. County authorities, however, denied the group even this small

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[758] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 14 June 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 8 June 1965, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse.

triumph, ultimately slashing $80,000 more from the School Board's pittance of a request and authorizing school administrators to procure mobile classrooms to meet September's enrollment needs rather than open Farmville High.[759]

If evaluated upon grounds of measurable success in achieving its major organizational goals – improving conditions in the public schools and enticing more whites to return to the public system – Citizens for Public Education failed miserably. Despite the impressive educational credentials of many of its members, the reliable information and thoughtful analysis contained in its reports, and the rationality and validity of its proposals, those charged with administering the county public schools dismissed the group out of hand. Devoid of enforcement powers and fiscal incentives for cooperation, CPE lacked the intimidation factor necessary to capture county authorities' reluctant cooperation. Yet from a community organizing/leadership development perspective, the relatively short-lived group proved a success. The first genuinely integrated progressive group to emerge in Prince Edward County, CPE spurred its members to band in common cause with individuals on the other side of the racial divide, develop genuine interracial partnerships, visibly challenge white segregationists' chosen course of action, and assume personal responsibility for changing the patterns of dominance and inequality that governed life in the county. Municipal authorities' strategy of strangulation and starvation banked upon community acquiescence in the plan to nullify *Griffin*. CPE's highly public campaign to document and expose the substandard quality of the reopened schools denied authorities the cloak of secrecy to

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[759] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 14 June 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Board of Supervisors Minutes, 29 June 1965, Supervisors' Records, Vol. 10, PEC Courthouse.

cover their actions. It revealed the county's continuing war against public education in all its ugliness. It failed to achieve the changes it sought, but as in 1951, community adults' failure to secure improvements in the school system once again motivated Moton High students to take matters into their own hands.

CHAPTER 9

PRINCE EDWARD'S NEW BATTLEGROUNDS: THE TUITION GRANT BATTLE AND THE WAR ON POVERTY, 1964-66

While blacks and white moderates battled for better conditions in the schools, the majority of white residents fixed their attention on the future of the tuition grants they had assumed would again become available to them with the resumption of public education. Alleging a symbiotic relationship between the perpetuation of the tuition grant program and the marginalization of public education, L.F. Griffin returned to the courtroom to mount a new campaign challenging the legitimacy of any public aid to private education. White leaders focused their efforts on blocking Griffin's maneuver, promising to increase the public school budget in exchange for black acceptance of the grant program. Yet even as the tuition grant controversy played out in courtrooms, meeting rooms and public spaces across the county, civil rights advocates and obstructionists alike looked toward the emerging federal War on Poverty to chart the next stage of the Prince Edward struggle. With a consciousness forged in the experience of the Free Schools, they identified the new Community Action Programs as the next battleground for control of the county's future.

Initially hopeful that the antipoverty crusade would provide a solid framework for constructing a broad-based social change program, the AFSC plumbed the community, youth, and job training programs available through the Office of Economic Opportunity to identify the ones best situated to serve Prince Edward residents. Assisting with the organization of the Prince Edward County Community Action Group and the execution of the first OEO programs in the county, AFSC staff members helped the local movement

transition into its next phase: pursuing interrelated social, educational, and vocational programming under the broad umbrella of the War on Poverty. Though disappointed that the new programs failed to substantially challenge the patterns of inequality in the county and concerned that black residents, Griffin included, too readily accepted prominent segregationists' presence in community action leadership circles, AFSC saw the local freedom struggle moving into a new stage. Barred by both practical and philosophical reasons from remaining in the county indefinitely, the Friends chose 1965 as the year to dismantle the local Community Relations Program. AFSC's August withdrawal marked the end of the most focused, concentrated era in Prince Edward's civil rights struggle.

Public Funds for Private Schools: Virginia's Tuition Grant Program

The Supreme Court's March 1964 hearing of the *Griffin* case launched community, state and federal forces into a debate centering upon the future validity of tuition grants in Prince Edward and the constitutionality of the statewide grant program. Under existing law, localities theoretically possessed the right to refuse to provide local funds for tuition grants. If they chose to do so, however, the state withheld in response an amount of money equal to the calculated share from other state funds allocated to the municipality. In January 1964, a few rumblings against this coercion rose in the General Assembly. Senators Hunter Andrews (Hampton) and Fred Bateman (Newport News) proposed a bill allowing localities to withdraw from the program without financial penalty. Quickly referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections for discuss, the measure never reemerged for public debate. In the House of Delegates, freshman John Hagen, representing the heavily white Greater Roanoke area, introduced a companion bill

seeking abolition of the tuition grant program on populist grounds. Hagen's constituents, residents of one of the state's most industrialized, class-conscious regions, opposed tuition grants on the principle that the funds helped "the bluebloods...people who were sending their children to private schools in the first place." Unsurprisingly, Hagen's bill also met an early death, this time in the House Education Committee, but this debate, truncated as it might have been, provided the NAACP the window of opportunity it awaited to initiate two suits challenging the program's constitutionality.[760]

The first case, *Griffin v. Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County*, argued that tuition grants, as used in Prince Edward and Surry Counties, allowed county officials to continue to offer their school-age children a segregated education at public expense – a direct violation of the *Brown* decision. In December 1964, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals found for the plaintiffs, avowing that in these two counties tuition grants were nothing less than "a transparent evasion of the Fourteenth Amendment." Noting that the relationship between PESF and SCEF (Surry County Educational Foundation) schools and public funds and public officials was extensive enough to render them essentially "public" facilities, the court permanently enjoined payment of grants in these two counties." Judge Simon Sobeloff's ruling that "the clear and unavoidable implication of the *Brown* decision is that white persons have no constitutional right to associate in

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[760] Allan Jones, "Tuition Grants' Repeal, Changes Are Proposed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 January 1964, clipping, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; "Measure to Repeal Tuition Grants Dies," *Richmond-Times Dispatch*, 20 January 1964, ibid.

publicly maintained facilities on a segregated basis." deeply discomfited segregationists.[761]

While this case wound its way through the judicial system, a class action suit filed in August 1964 under the name *Griffin v. State Board of Education* requested a general invalidation of the entire tuition grant program.[762] It named as defendants the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the governing bodies of nine locales containing private schools corporations formed to avoid desegregation. Pointing out that state statutes provided tax credits for contributions to private schools, plaintiffs argued that the sole purpose of the tuition grant plan, whether classified as "massive resistance" or "freedom of choice," constituted the maintenance of segregated schools. Insisting that the tuition grant law served an unconstitutional end – evading desegregation – the suit argued that this unconstitutional purpose rendered the statute itself unconstitutional, whether used to perpetuate segregated schools or not.[763]

The state rejoined that the program – even grants to segregated private schools – did not violate the constitutional rights of blacks so long as public schools remained open. Falling back on the rhetoric of parental privilege, it claimed Fourteenth Amendment protection for parents' right to educate their children in schools of their own choice. In March 1965, the district court enjoined payment of grants in Prince Edward and eight other counties where they comprised the bulk of support for segregated school

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[761] Fourth Circuit Court Opinion in *Griffin v. Board of Supervisors,* 339 F. 2d 486 (1964).
[762] *Griffin v. State Board of Education*, 239 F. Supp. 560 (1965).

[763] Allan Jones, "Virginia's Tuition Grants Challenged in U.S. Court: Constitutional Test Long Anticipated," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 August 1964, clipping, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; Allan Jones, "Segregated Schools Held Purpose of Grants," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 21 November 1964, ibid.

systems, maintaining that constitutionality depended upon the percentage of total school costs borne by tuition grants. The opinion nevertheless upheld the law's essential constitutionality, ruling that grants could be acceptable for use even in segregated schools so long as they did not comprise a "predominant" source of an institution's income.[764]

Convinced that the ruling opened the door for token desegregation and manipulation of the number or timing of tuition grants, the NAACP's S.W. Tucker appealed to the Supreme Court. Four years later, in the wake of the High Court's intervening affirmation of district court judgments in similar cases arising out of Louisiana and South Carolina, the district court revisited the question. Setting aside their earlier verdict in face of the Supreme Court's insistence that the validity of a tuition grant plan depends upon whether it in ANY measure "contributes to or permits continuance of segregated public school education," the judges declared the entire program invalid in February 1969. While allowing the continuance of tuition payments for the remainder of the 1968-69 academic year, the court commented that "a law may survive despite its unacceptable consequences, if the valid portions may be independently enforced. Here, as we see, there can be no such separation and the entire law must go."[765]

Before the courts issued their decisions, however, negotiations began in Prince Edward County as early as Summer 1964. Free School organizer Bill Vanden Heuvel and his new "local man," PEFSA Business Manager Bill Baldwin, attempted to pressure

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[764] "Pupil Grants Legal If Schools Are Integrated, State Says," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 October 1964, ibid; United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia Opinion, *Griffin v. State Board of Education*, 239 F. Supp. 560 (1965).

[765] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia Opinion in *Griffin v. State Board of Education*, 296 F. Supp. 1178 (1969).

residents to adopt a course of action they considered a reasonable compromise: a decently funded public school system in exchange for black willingness to support tuition grants. Baldwin enlisted Free School Association PTA president Roger Madison to convince black residents to participate in these negotiations. but ultimately, Madison succeeded only in weakening his own leadership role in the community.[766]

At a July 1964 meeting of CCPE, Baldwin assured the group that a reservoir of state funds awaited Prince Edward in Richmond, and that the final budget for the public schools would exceed $600,000. Hinting at plans to build a consolidated elementary school and promising attendees that the county would certainly raise its taxes to increase local contribution to the budget after the exhaustion of state funds, he warned them that pushing for the opening of Farmville High could jeopardize the whole package. At root, however, Baldwin's message attempted to convey the idea that the crisis had passed and public education advocacy groups like CCPE no longer possessed a reason for existence. Though members demurred to abolish the organization, noting that citizens' committees played a useful role even in the most progressive school systems, a furious Nancy Adams wrote Jean Fairfax that "my opinion is that Baldwin can't be trusted as far as I can throw J. Barrye Wall."[767]

Reading between the lines of his statements and behavior, she charged that the powers that be hoped to pacify blacks with promises of good (possibly new) schools without promising substantial financial commitment from the county. She alleged that they capitalized on Baldwin's Free School credibility with the black community, using

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[766] Adams to Fairfax, 4 May 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives. ibid; Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964. ibid.

[767] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett. 6 July 1964, ibid.

him as a trustworthy go-between to lure residents into a false sense of security and motivate them to relax their guard and lose organizational momentum. Whites possessed every intention, she insisted, of clinging to the Academy, shelling out tuition grants indefinitely and weaving the fabric of segregation ever more deeply into local society. Worst of all, the plan proved partially successful – far too many people for Adams' comfort swallowed the reassurances. Griffin corroborated this pessimistic view of Baldwin's role with the assertion that he heard Board of Supervisors' attorney Segar Gravatt comment in a Richmond courtroom that Baldwin was near to getting "the niggers to sign on the dotted line."[768]

Around the same time, Bill Vanden Heuvel convinced S.W. Tucker to come to a meeting in Farmville to negotiate with the power group and called Griffin to invite him to attend. When Baldwin came to see Griffin about the meeting, neglecting to mention Vanden Heuvel's involvement, the preacher grew suspicious, asking what attendees were to "negotiate." Upon hearing his response – "you want good schools, we want tuition grants, you figure it out" – Griffin called Tucker to warn the lawyer that the power group would ask him to withdraw the tuition grants case or throw it in court. When Vanden Heuvel's plane arrived in Alexandria to pick up his passenger, Tucker sent him a message that he could no longer attend. Angered, Vanden Heuvel returned to Washington. Roger Madison later blamed Griffin for "sabotaging the only change to get good schools."[769]

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[768] Ibid.

[769] Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, ibid.

In the wake of this fiasco, relations between black and white leaders descended to a new low. When Vanden Heuvel arrived in the county at the end of the month for a PEFSA picnic, he turned his attention to wooing Nancy Adams. Laying out his rationale over dinner, he explained his belief that allowing tuition grants to continue at least one more year would mend the relationship between the two communities, soften white attitudes, and increase willingness to utilize the public school system when they ceased. Offering her a long list of promises for the public system, very few of which actually materialized in 1964-65 or any of the following years, he urged her to encourage Griffin to meet with the negotiators and accept the grants. Adams refused, explaining her own belief that giving in on the tuition grant issue would demoralize the black community, which had sacrificed too much already, and that instead of haggling over tuition grants, community leaders should devote their attention to creating a quality school system. Concluding that she would not be moved, Vanden Heuvel angrily retorted that without compromise, the stalemate would continue, querying, "Well, what do you want them to do – just stand on each side of the street and throw rocks at each other, then?" In situations such as this, the AFSC commitment to principle over strategy caused more "pragmatic" negotiators untoward frustration.[770]

Blacks scored a small victory on July 3, when Tucker and Marsh secured a last-second injunction blocking a State Board of Education plan to issue retroactive tuition grants to parents whose children attended Foundation schools in 1963-64. Griffin arrived in Farmville with the signed restraining order just hours before county authorities began distributing checks. On July 9, the ubiquitous Judge Lewis permanently enjoined

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[770] Ibid.

retroactive grants in the county, but refused to compel the Board of Supervisors to appropriate more money for the School Board budget or to bar present and future use of tuition grants. Tucker and Marsh, predictably, appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court. Both Lewis and the Court of Appeals suggested that no dispersal of tuition funds take place until the courts settled the question, and lawyers for both sides agreed. The Supervisors, however, who already made history by going their own way, felt no compulsion to abide by this agreement.[771]

Hours after their regular August 4th session, members of the Board of Supervisors regrouped around 10:00 pm for an unannounced meeting. Determined to ensure that no last-minute injunction impeded the distribution of the $375,000 allocated for 1964-65 tuition grants – and that no blacks applied for funds to use toward education at schools outside the county – they embarked upon a carefully planned and thoroughly illegal disbursal of funds. Sending checks for $180,000 to the town armory, they alerted a poised and ready vigilante committee consisting of PESF personnel and county officials to begin spreading the news to white residents. While some members went to work on previously prepared phone lists, others fanned out to move door to door through the rural areas where residents did not possess telephones or shared party lines with blacks. From 11:00 pm to 7:00 am, vigilance committee members rousted citizens out of bed, encouraging them to go to the armory immediately, then proceed directly to the bank and

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[771] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 6 July 1964, ibid; Allan Jones, "Grants Plan Injunction Will Stand," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 9 July 1964, clipping, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; "Negroes To Appeal Lewis' Decisions," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 18 July 1964, ibid; Robert Holland, "Grants Disbursed in Prince Edward," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, n.d., clipping, 1964 Box, Folder 38749, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

cash the check. Fearful that the black community would seek an injunction in the morning, organizers counseled the need for speed and complete secrecy. They advised parents that the Supervisors would distribute the other half of the $375,000 on or before January 1, 1965.[772]

By 3:00 AM, five hundred people roamed the usually quiet streets of Farmville. Six hours later, the five lines at the bank spilled down the block and around the corner. Police directed traffic around the pedestrians and a spirit of jubilation and triumph filled the air. Residents clapped each other on the back and compared their "how they woke me" stories. Some sang "Dixie" and cheered the returning vigilantes, while others congratulated each other on the "cleverness and tempo" of the plot. From her spectator's position on the sidewalk in front of the bank, Adams observed that the event certainly cleared up any doubt that might have remained "that the four years of very tragic pathos which surrounded the Negro children, or the presence of the very elaborate Free School with instructors from all over the country had in any way enlightened the Prince Edwardian citizens." After all the events of the previous year – the street demonstrations, the consumer boycott, the unprecedented Free Schools and all the publicity surrounding them, and the Supreme Court's ruling in *Griffin* – they still congratulated themselves on striking a blow for southern resistance.[773]

Recognizing that AFSC could do little about the situation besides try to ensure extensive press coverage, Community Relations Program Secretary Barbara Moffett

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[772] Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, ibid; Robert Holland, "Grants Disbursed in Prince Edward," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, n.d., clipping, 1964 Box, Folder 38749, ibid.

[773] Ibid; Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

asked SRC's Les Dunbar to make some calls. Aware that the majority of southern beat newsmen were in Mississippi covering the search for the bodies of the three missing civil rights workers[774], Dunbar put his contacts to use, and several stories ultimately ran. As Moffett commented later, however, "the trouble is still the old trouble, though, and that is that the situation lacks drama." National newspapermen rarely covered Virginia stories, for as *New York Times* reporter Ben Franklin once told Ed Peeples, "the editors think that the civil rights stories are in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia." Adams, however, saw high drama in the fact that every white parent involved with CCPE or the Field group, individuals whom she had truly believed to be on the verge of enrolling their children in the public schools and viewed as a vanguard to encourage others to do the same, accepted the money.[775]

Most felt great shame at their decision, admitting in a halting manner that they should have called upon learning of the plot. Ruth Field explained that the number of people on the streets and the tone pervading the group had terrified her, filling her with fear that her neighbors would "have killed her" if they had learned she had informed on them. Most attempted to justify their decision to accept the grants, admitting that it was "an awful thing to have to do," "a terrible moral struggle," and for the Hampden-Sydney

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[774] Three Mississippi Freedom Summer volunteers on their way to investigate the burning of a black church – James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman – disappeared in June 1964. After a highly publicized search, their mutilated bodies were discovered on August 4, buried in an earthen dam in Philadelphia, Mississippi. See John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995) and Nicolaus Mills, *Like a Holy Crusade: Mississippi 1964 – The Turning Point of the Civil Rights Movement in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992).

[775] Moffett to Fairfax, 9 August 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38583; Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578. ibid; Edward Peeples interview, 29 June 2006, transcript, p. 13.

faculty members, "a case of loyalty to the college" (unless they accepted the grants, H-SC would be obligated to pay their children's tuition.)[776]

The maneuver thoroughly outraged the black community. The unprecedented interracial trust and cooperation growing among CCPE members splintered and the group stagnated for several weeks whiles whites sheepishly kept their distance and blacks grappled with their anger. Though the group did eventually recover and launch its period of greatest activity, the scars of the betrayal never fully disappeared. Tucker immediately filed a contempt suit terming the action an effort to "frustrate the exercise of the of jurisdiction of this court by placing the subject matter of litigation beyond the reach of the court before the Negroes' appeal could be heard and determined." In June 1966, the Fourth Circuit Court concurred. Citing the Supervisors for civil contempt, the court ordered the Board to restore the $180,000 distributed to the county treasury. Veteran member Charles Pickett told a reporter that, "they're going to have to hold me for a while if they think they're going to get $30,000 (one sixth of the total) out of me." The Supervisors appealed to the Supreme Court, which declined to review the case, ultimately forcing them to ask parents to return the money paid out two years earlier. Though the initial appeal requested voluntary reimbursement, Board members did not rule out the possibility of taking legal action against recalcitrant parents.[777]

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[776] Adams to Fairfax, 10 August 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578. ibid, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

In the short term, however, county authorities continued to flex their muscles. After word leaked out that black youth were planning another economic boycott and accompanying picket in retaliation, Sheriff James Clark appeared at the door of the Miller Building to serve Griffin and NAACP Youth Advisor Rev. Goodwin Douglas of Bethel AME Church summonses to appear in juvenile court the following morning. Judge William Hay kept them waiting through a long succession of child support and breach of peace cases before finally summoning the ministers to his chamber to serve them a restraining order prohibiting them from "encouraging the delinquency of minors in the form of demonstrations, peaceful picketing, etc." Holding that such actions would lead to lawlessness, Hay informed Griffin and Douglas that he would hold them personally responsible for any actions taken by youth under the age of eighteen. S.W. Tucker, in response, initiated yet another suit against the county: an appeal of the restraining order.[778]

In the meantime, a mass meeting at First Baptist a few days later produced a decision to move forward with an over-eighteen picket accompanied by leaflets advising black consumers to buy only at stores cooperating with community leaders' attempts to end discriminatory practices. Such businesses included Hub Department Store, Green

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[777] Ibid; Adams to Bucklin and Miller, 8 October 1964, ibid; Update Report, "AFSC Work in Prince Edward County, Virginia, October 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38572, ibid; "Contempt Motion Is Filed Against Prince Edward Board," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 14 August 1964, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; "6 Virginians Face Levy of $180,000," *New York Times*, 1 January 1967; Carl Eggleston and Chuckie Reid, "Supervisors Ask Midnight Raid Loot Be Returned," *The VOICE*, February 1967, Vol. 3, No. 1, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[778] Robert Holland, "Negro Leaders Told Not to Recruit Youths," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 14 August 1964, clipping, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Front Grocery, Gray's Drugstore, and all the stores in Lester Andrews and Maurice Large's shopping center. Enthusiasm for the boycott, however, dragged from the beginning. With the youth – the historic force behind demonstrations in Prince Edward – relegated to a leafleting role, many adults sank into despondency, grumbling that the proposed action would never really accomplish anything anyway. Griffin nevertheless forged ahead, informing attendees that organizers would contact them for help and support, and the boycott went into effect August 18th. However, after the majority of the youth leaders left later that week for an AFSC-sponsored citizenship camp, leafleting ceased. Picket lines dwindled and Nancy Adams noted in mid-September that although theoretically still in effect, the boycott in reality exerted little to no impact upon life in the community.[779]

The War on Poverty, Prince Edward Style

As federal initiatives under the Johnson administration shifted from defusing civil rights crises to addressing their underlying issues through combating poverty, Prince Edward residents and their outside supporters looked hopefully to the War on Poverty to bring equity to the county. The Economic Opportunity Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in August 1964, pledged to destroy poverty through bolstering educational, housing, health care and job training opportunities in poor communities across the nation. Many of its framers cherished a particular concern for children and youth, convinced that early

[779] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 17 September 1964, ibid; "Boycotts, Picketing Planned By Prince Edward Negroes," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 August 1964, clipping, Box 1, "1964 Prince Edward County" Folder, S.W. Tucker Papers, VCU.

intervention could substantially curb poverty and related social problems among members of the next generation.[780]

The concept of "the culture of poverty," a self-perpetuating way of thinking and behaving that isolated the truly desperate from the mainstream of American society, rendering it impossible for them to reap the benefits of an expanding economy, stood at the center of the new effort. The sociologists, bureaucrats and human service workers behind the War on Poverty held that such a culture could never be substantially altered by a piecemeal approach to specific and isolated problems, but must rather be eradicated by a full-frontal assault backed by all the power and resources of the federal government. Some interpreted this to mean that the state must become an agent of socialization, teaching the marginalized the basic skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in a competitive capitalist economy.[781]

Others, including AFSC community relations workers, argued that only the "effective participation and integration of the poor in the major institutions of the larger society" would eradicate poverty. Pointing to the importance of action and participation in overcoming apathy and self-doubt, they championed programs that built class consciousness, solidarity and a sense of empowerment. More conservative analysts, on the other hand, maintained that the culture of poverty could be eradicated only through

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[780] For an analysis of the racial politics of the War on Poverty, see Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.) Jeanette Valentine, Catherine J. Ross and Edward Zigler, "Epilogue," in *Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty*, ed. Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine (New York: The Free Press, 1979): 509-514.

[781] Quadagno, p. 35-37. See also Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971) and Michael L. Gillette, *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History*, Twayne's Oral History Series, ed. Donald A. Ritchie, no. 23 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

the transformation of individuals. Only by inculcating the poor with middle-class standards and lifting them from their environment could they be saved. This concept flirted dangerously with a conception of poverty as a punishment for personal deficiency, threatening to blur the lines between a war on poverty and a war on the poor.[782]

Though the first antipoverty programs, the Area Redevelopment Agency (focused on increasing employment in depressed areas through providing loans and subsidies to small businesses) and the Manpower Development and Training Program (retraining workers displaced by automation), developed under the Kennedy administration, the comprehensive antipoverty campaign did not take shape until the ascension of Lyndon Johnson. Johnson's programs originated in the months following the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and passed Congress in the midst of a summer of urban unrest, as riots swept the ghettos of New York City, Rochester, Jersey City, Paterson, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Calculated to defuse social and economic tension and reorient the national social policy agenda toward eradicating racial inequality, observers considered the hallmark of the War on Poverty its concern for the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the decision making and resource allocation process. Under the new Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), headed by the Peace Corps' Sargent Shriver, the new antipoverty program skirted the old-line bureaucracies and social service agencies, establishing more direct communication between community groups and the federal government. Though it began as a top-down effort, civil rights activists seized the inherent opportunities to create alternate structures of power in their

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[782] Quadagno, p. 35-37; David Zarefsky, *President Johnson's War on Poverty: Rhetoric and History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1986), p. 108-109.

communities, struggling to turn federal funding into a lever to wrest power away from mayors and white-controlled local governmental agencies.[783]

This strategy succeeded better in certain places than in others. In Mississippi, the "cellar of America," the grants to Community Action Agencies strengthened civil rights coalitions, creating new patronage networks that substantially eroded the control of the white power structure. In Chicago, on the other hand, the city's entrenched political machine managed to co-opt community action, further enriching its own supremacy. Ultimately, however, community action's potential to deliver upon the promise of equal opportunity prompted the established powers to rebel against a program that threatened to level American society. The early goal of taking direction from the poor themselves rather than privileged bureaucrats gradually lost ground in the face of mayors' propensity to fill the boards of their Community Action Agencies with local elites. At first, OEO officials resisted strenuously, insisting that at least one-third of the members of these groups remain representatives of the disadvantaged themselves.[784]

As a rising tide of resentment toward the new governmental concern for the marginalized began to sweep the nation, however, policymakers, some smarting from what they considered unreasonable demands from newly empowered people, retreated from such insistence. Moderation and cooperation took precedence over radicalism and redistribution of resources. Even before this later shift, however, some activists predicted that southern white elites would be as quick to manipulate the new OEO bureaucracy as they had been to racialize the frameworks of the New Deal. Encouraged by the promise

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[783] Quadagno, p. 27, 30-31, 33.

[784] Ibid, p. 11, 33, 35. See also John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

of the program, they nonetheless warned that the ongoing role provided local authorities could undermine the goal of reaching the truly disadvantaged.[785]

Nancy Adams commented in November 1964 that, "I've read all the stuff I have on OEO and I get excited every time I think what it could mean to Prince Edward." In December, she joined AFSC Community Relations Division Assistant Secretary Eleanor Eaton in Washington, DC for a day of meeting OEO officials and identifying ways that the Economic Opportunity Act could improve the situation Prince Edward County. The day's experiences proved surprisingly for both women, who departed with a conception of OEO's Washington-based administrators as well-intentioned, but extremely out of touch with realities on the ground, particularly in the rural South.[786]

In a meeting with Sidney Woolner, Acting Regional Director of the OEO Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, the three discussed the procedures for requesting a community action program grant and the ways in which the proposed project would be required to cooperate with the state. Eaton and Adams argued that the racial and class hostilities of the rural South, not to mention the comparatively low education level and dearth of community institutions among residents, rendered the task of assembling the diverse band of citizens required to form a Community Action Agency nearly impossible. Elected officials, by and large, lacked interest in supporting programs that disproportionately

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[785] Quadagno, p. 43. For more on the racial politics of the New Deal, see Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights As a National Issue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) and Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[786] Adams to Fairfax, 28 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38573, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives;

benefited blacks and viewed ones aimed at interracial beneficiaries with distrust and fear.[787]

Furthermore, in a region characterized by low citizen participation in political, charitable, and service-oriented groups, locating individuals with prior involvement in poverty issues presented a daunting challenge. The Quakers opposed the idea of assembling a group of "experts" – representatives of human rights and social service organizations – and passing it off as indigenous to the community, but feared that under the present requirements, such a course of action might prove necessary. While Woolner insisted that Virginia governor Albertis Harrison would not dare, for political reasons, to exercise his stated right to veto an OEO program, Eaton and Adams remained unconvinced.[788]

In the Job Corps office, they met an administrator whom they deemed well-meaning but equally naïve. Rattled when they rebutted her spiel about posting recruitment posters in post offices, libraries and employment offices with the observation that most southern libraries did not admit blacks, that southern blacks generally avoided post offices, and that many members of the program's target audience could not read, she fumbled to come up with an alternative strategy. Neither Adams nor Eaton considered her suggestion that Adams herself could read the promotional literature to interested teenagers and fill out their applications for them particularly creative or practical. They also cautioned that the screening agents used by Job Corps – the Virginia State Employment Commission and the Prince Edward County School Board – were not likely

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[787] Eleanor Eaton to Moffett and Fairfax, 11 December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38575, ibid.

[788] Ibid.

to possess genuine concern for applicants or go out of their way to explain the program or recruit potential participants.[789]

In a meeting with Community Action Program (CAP) Director Jack Conway, Adams found herself extremely discouraged by Conway's tendency to respond to her every comment with reassurances that Bill Vanden Heuvel would soon come on his staff and take care of Prince Edward's every need. Agreeing that Vanden Heuvel had indeed pulled off a magnificent coup with the Free Schools. Adams nonetheless insisted that OEO needed to recognize the unique obstacles to its programs presented by the realities of the rural South and readjust accordingly. Brushing off her concern that OEO officials repeatedly pronounced themselves on the verge of a major breakthrough in the South, but the expected breakthrough never materialized, he assured her that he would "see to it that this program" succeeded. When he explained that southern governors provided the missing link, noting that working with them produced drawing board plans in Birmingham and Atlanta, Adams groaned, pointing out the different patterns at work in rural areas. According to her account of the conversation, "True, he said, but Vanden Heuvel was coming. At this point he stood, said 'keep me informed about Prince George,' and whisked me out the door."[790]

Stanley Peterson and Mark Battle of Neighborhood Youth Corps (NYC) proved more sympathetic to the difficulties of getting the Prince Edward County School Board or any of the usual agencies to sponsor an NYC project. After hearing about Citizens for Public Education, they agreed that the group could possibly be approved as a sponsor for

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[789] Ibid.

[790] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 7 December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38578, ibid.

a cleanup project renovating the closed public school buildings into community centers. When Adams and Eaton confessed that local sources of financing could probably not meet the requirement of supplying paint and materials, they agreed to look into the possibility of supplying it themselves. Despite this positive encounter, the balance of the day deeply discouraged the two women. Eaton commented that:

> It seems to me that unless you really have well oiled channels of communication and tremendous political power to back up your request, not a great deal is going to happen to sound modest program requests. I may be unduly pessimistic, but there seems to be an invisible wall through which you can't penetrate no matter how hard you try.[791]

Bill Vanden Heuvel, the "very bright kid" Conway predicted could do the impossible for Prince Edward, did plunge headfirst into setting up a Community Action Group immediately upon settling into OEO. While local black leaders and AFSC staff members did not view the Free Schools as either an educational miracle or a universal good, they did recognize that their organizer constituted a powerful ally and worked to keep the channels of communication open. Griffin wrote him in November 1964 to express his concerns about the situation in the community. Insisting that too many people remained under the impression that the Free Schools provided a panacea for all evils in Prince Edward, he charged that the school system had not lacked problems, namely the Board of Directors' propensity to make concessions to county authorities without consulting the black community.

Griffin worried that these concessions created a dangerous precedent, leading school authorities to assume that black citizens would contentedly accept any operational public school system, regardless of quality. His letter to Vanden Heuvel boiled over with

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[791] Eaton to Moffett and Fairfax, 11 December 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38575, ibid.

the disappointment and injustice of the situation. "What a good many of us feared inwardly is now an actuality," he noted sharply. "After thirteen years of litigation, we have only succeeded in reopening a type of public school system vastly inferior to the one in existence in 1959." Worse still, the attitudes of the whites in power remained unchanged. School Board members continued to assume that "education for Negro children in Prince Edward County is a privilege, not a right."[792]

Vanden Heuvel came to Prince Edward the following February to investigate the possibilities for establishing a Community Action Program in the county. After a series of meetings with the white power structure, he announced to Griffin and Adams that he had assembled a committee including a number of influential white segregationists, including Commonwealth Attorney Watkins, Ray Moore, and Robert Taylor (a prominent manufacturer and PESF leader), as well as moderate businessman Waverly Putney and "three or four Negroes," none of whom possessed a history of standing up to the power bloc. Vanden Heuvel did not know if the group would accept Griffin as a member, but thought it could be arranged. Shell-shocked, Adams deemed the proposal "about as bad as any committee which the local white structure would have formed on their own and strictly for their own reasons and benefits." Many members of the power bloc found it more comfortable to interact with blacks than with other whites who exposed the holes in white solidarity by disagreeing with the dominant position. Fully aware of this fact, she resented Vanden Heuvel's willingness to accept their prejudice and

[792] Griffin to Vanden Heuvel, 25 November 1964, 1964 Box, Folder 38573, ibid.

subsequent refusal to consider seeking out more liberal whites, whom he dismissed as "non-power figures" who did not "represent anything except a radical group."[793]

When CPE leaders Carl Walters and Jerry Williamson paid a subsequent call to Ray Moore to discuss School Board behavior during a recent CPE presentation, Moore found himself unable to resist the opportunity to demonstrate his "elevated" position in the county hierarchy by discussing the semi-secret meeting. He gleefully alleged that Vanden Heuvel had ridiculed both CPE and the idea that any of its leaders could play an effective role on the CAP committee. Spilling out details left and right, he vowed that Vanden Heuvel had convinced white leaders they would be fools not to take federal money, that the final committee would not be "that bad," and that Griffin was "pretty well shot" and would not make trouble. Continuing in the same vein, he alleged that Vanden Heuvel suggested that so long as county leaders kept Griffin humored, more "militant" (i.e. SNCC or CORE) black leadership could never infiltrate the community. Deeply shocked by Moore's allegations, bewildered that they had not been informed of an OEO official's presence in the county, and somewhat hurt that he had supposedly ridiculed the very people who would be most likely to work conscientiously for a good Community Action Program, they brought their concerns to Adams.[794]

No records from the meetings between Vanden Heuvel and members of the power group survive, so what truly transpired will probably never be known. Deeply bitter toward CPE, antagonistic toward the federal government, and hostile toward everything the War on Poverty represented, Ray Moore constituted an unfriendly source of information. Regardless, it seems valid to observe that, in this case, Vanden Heuvel's

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[793] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, ibid.
[794] Ibid.

legendary ability to wrangle compromise through keeping groups separate and telling them only what they needed to hear, seriously eroded the trust of the black community. Confused by the circulating accounts of the meeting and disappointed in the narrow scope of Vanden Heuvel's proposed program. Griffin and Adams drove to Washington to speak with AFSC ally Jack Mansfield, an employee of the North Carolina Fund and an expert on OEO and Community Action Programs. At the time, both considered the visit an unofficial chat between friends, aimed only at exploring the theoretical possibilities of the Economic Opportunity Act. After the day's startling events and a subsequent phone conference with Jean Fairfax, Adams noted wryly that "this was definitely not the step to take."[795]

Not an hour after the two arrived in Mansfield's office, Vanden Heuvel's secretary appeared at the door to inquire if they came from Prince Edward County. When they answered "yes," she informed them that Vanden Heuvel wished to see them in his office immediately. They responded that they would come up when the discussion with Mansfield reached an appropriate stopping point. Half an hour later, according to Adams' account, a nearly apoplectic Vanden Heuvel himself appeared in the doorway, screaming, "What are you two doing sneaking around behind my back?" Startled, Griffin and Adams hastened to assure him that they were not there to discuss his proposed project, but merely to better inform themselves about the general scope of the poverty program. Unmollified, he retorted that they did not need to inform themselves, only trust him to handle things. Explaining that Ray Moore had stirred up a lot of trouble after

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[795] Ibid.

Vanden Heuvel's departure from the county, Griffin described the rising community agitation surrounding the manner in which things were being handled.[796]

Retorting that it would be "absolutely impossible" to pursue any other course of action in the county, he turned on Adams, accusing her of deliberately causing problems in an effort to destroy his committee. Broadening the attack to the AFSC as a whole, he ridiculed the organization as "too idealistic and not at all practical." Wheeling to face Jack Mansfield, he demanded to know who assigned him to Prince Edward County, why he chose to interfere with Vanden Heuvel's work, and how he would handle county programs if in charge. When Mansfield responded with a line about getting citizens involved on a ground level, Vanden Heuvel scoffed that he "ought to join the Friends." Turning back to Nancy Adams, he insisted that opposing his program would retard progress in the county for the next five years. Claiming that CPE was "hated in town," he dismissed the very thought of involving its members in the CAG as laughable. When he proceeded to ask "why in the hell we [AFSC] didn't care about the children of Prince Edward County," Griffin stepped in to defuse the situation.[797]

Assuring Vanden Heuvel that no one possessed any intention of "opposing him and his work in the county," he explained that Prince Edward blacks were nonetheless not ready to "buy" his committee and its offered program, and would thus continue to look into other possibilities in order to evaluate his suggestions. Shaking his head, Vanden Heuvel scoffed, "Well, okay, Griff, you play along with these people, and you call me when you want something done," turned on his heel, and left the room. Shaken,

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[796] Ibid.

[797] Ibid.

the three immediately left the building for dinner, not returning until after the offices closed, at which time they resumed their discussion of OEO for several more hours.

Shortly afterward, Agricultural Extension Services, through its county office, appointed a temporary committee to explore the funding possibilities for Prince Edward. Deciding to invite Robert Kirby, Governor Harrison's appointee to head the Virginia OEO office, to come to a public meeting to explain the program to residents, committee members sent personal invitations to leaders of various community organizations, CPE included. At the next CPE meeting, Carl Walters described the program possibilities outlined by Jack Mansfield and encouraged the membership to attend en masse. Determined to pad the turnout with blacks and sympathetic whites, leaders distributed reminders to both their membership list and one obtained from the local NAACP chapter. Understandably suspicious of state officials, Griffin and black agricultural agent Rudolph Doswell used their contacts to also secure the attendance of a federal OEO official, a Mr. Humphrey from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office.[798]

Nearly two hundred people, slightly over half of whom represented the progressive community, turned out for the meeting. Kirby presented a fairly negative picture of the program's possibilities, but Humphrey quickly jumped in to offer the other side. After an extensive question and answer session, attendees voted to enlarge the temporary committee and authorize it to accept nominations from all existing groups in the county for membership on the Prince Edward Community Action Program Committee. The chair of the meeting, white manufacturer Robert Taylor, read the list of temporary committee members to Humphrey, who observed that it seemed

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[798] Ibid.

disproportionately white. The group quickly appointed several more African Americans, at which time Humphrey pointed out that it lacked an NAACP representative. Taylor then appointed Griffin, followed by Supervisor John Steck, who in turn appointed County Welfare Director Frances Moon and the local public health official, a Dr. Clement.[799]

A few days later, Taylor called Griffin to inquire as to his interest in serving jointly as co-directors of the permanent Community Action Group. Though initially suspicious, Griffin eventually agreed and the two served together until 1967, at which time the minister took over as sole director. Nancy Adams frowned upon the clandestine manner in which the group made its early decisions, noting in disapproval that Taylor and Griffin were "single-handedly running the program." Though selected in early April, by the end of the month, members received no official notification of their appointment. Sparse publicity further increased her concern that leaders planned to gloss over community involvement and citizen contact – stated goals and requirements of the program. Encouraging Fairfax and Moffett to keep her concerns confidential out of respect for Griffin, she nonetheless reported that the co-directors repeatedly returned close-mouthed from "secret" meetings with OEO officials, offering only vague accounts of new developments. Noting ruefully that, "I ruminate and carry on about the lack of participating of the citizenry…and I rant and rave about the lack of leadership development due to this sort of secrecy, but to no avail." Responding that this is the way "things are done in Washington," Griffin disregarded her concerns. Perhaps federal officials encouraged this secrecy as a required element of deal-brokering. Perhaps the realities of working closely with less than egalitarian whites necessitated an under-the-

[799] Ibid.

table approach. Perhaps he feared that increased community involvement could jeopardize the unsteady alliances holding together the group.[800]

The two most successful programs brought to the county under the umbrella of the War on Poverty – Project Head Start and Operation Catch-Up, an intensive remedial reading venture – both served children as their primary audiences but attempted to penetrate further into the community as well. In order to properly understand these programs, it is important to remember that the mid-1960's constituted a time of great ferment in educational theory. In reaction to proponents of the long-held view that IQ embodied a fixed proportion unable to be substantially altered by educational experience. forward-thinking researchers began to claim that intelligence, particularly among young children, was relatively elastic. New studies suggested that even short-term educational intervention programs could raise children's IQ's 50-60 points. Advocates for disadvantaged youth optimistically embraced the idea of short-term "crash" programs, taking to heart the promise that the supposed malleability of young children allowed them to quickly recoup educational damages.[801]

Operation Catch-Up spanned the summer of 1965. A federal grant allowed its adaptation for use in the public school system during the 1965-66 and 1966-67 academic years. Formally titled "Reading in High Gear," the program originated with Dr. Myron Woolman, a learning theorist at Washington, DC's Institute of Educational Research (IER). Previously used to teach groups as diverse as mentally challenged children and

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[800] Ibid; Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 23 April 1965, ibid; J.Y. Smith, "Poverty Head Quits in Prince Edward," *Washington Post*, 14 July 1970.

[801] See Edward Zigler, "Head Start: Not a Program But An Evolving Concept," in *Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty*, ed. Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine (New York: The Free Press, 1979): 367-378.

guided-missile operators, Woolman's reading program promised impressive results. Built upon the "progressive choice" method, it introduced students to the meaning of spoken words they would eventually learn to read, explored the shapes and sounds of each part of a word, and ultimately brought the two together to teach both pronunciation and comprehension of the written word. After consultation with Griffin, Woolman and his IER staff agreed to focus the Prince Edward manifestation of the program on the approximately five hundred Moton students demonstrating significantly retarded reading and verbal skills.[802]

The Virginia Council on Human Relations handled teacher recruitment, assembling a staff of fifty-four, mostly comprised of Virginia collegians, though a few advanced high school students participated as well. Earlier in the spring, the Southern Presbyterian Church organized a group of ten Presbyterian students, led by now-ordained 1962 SCEP veteran Tony Sherman, to conduct a summer remedial project under the auspices of the church. When the proposed project hit a wall of hostility among local Presbyterians – every elder in each Presbyterian church in the county with the exception of Tyler Miller and every clergyman with the exception of Arthur Field voted against it – the students volunteered their services to Operation Catch-Up instead.[803]

The student-teachers resided in chaperoned communal "dormitories" – mostly vacant Farmville homes – and met with their classes four hours a day for eight weeks.

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[802] Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 16 March 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Bob Smith, "County's Crippled Generation," *Southern Education Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July/August 1966): 13-16.

[803] Bob Smith, "County's Crippled Generation," *Southern Education Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July/August 1966): 13-16; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Concerned that the college students had been offered little guidance in directing their non-teaching time and had the potential to become a disruptive force in the community, Nancy Adams stepped in to create "extracurricular" projects. Under her direction, one group worked with a pilot recreational program in Green Bay to develop future OEO proposals, another tutored black students preparing to enter Nottoway County's white schools, and another worked with Harriet White to set up a college guidance program to provide services not offered in the public schools. A fourth group assisted high school students in publishing the first few issues of *The VOICE of Prince Edward County*, a progressive community newspaper intended to offer an alternative to the segregationist *Farmville Herald.* Financing for the program, as well as room and board for the teachers and curriculum specialists, derived from a $90,000 CAP grant. Four hundred seventy-six at-risk students, many considered certain dropouts, attended the ten centers spread out across each of the county's six districts. Many worked through each day's scheduled break, refusing to lose any precious time with their books, then rushed home to assist their parents and siblings in the tobacco fields. Though summer "crash" programs were old hat in Prince Edward, both organizers and students devoutly hoped that this one would not end in September, but rather be expanded to serve all those denied a quality education.[804]

Academic gains, though not remarkable, proved quite solid. By the end of the summer, improving students averaged eight months' gain in word comprehension and one year's improvement in paragraph comprehension. The results inspired the Prince

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[804] "They Are Learning to Read," *The VOICE*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1965), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 10 August 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Edward Community Action Group (PECAG) to set up a follow-up program for adults, which began classes on November 15th. Financed by a $48,060 OEO grant, the program served one hundred and fifty residents who wished to improve their reading skills or learn to read for the first time and met two hours each evening from Monday to Friday. Directed by Operation Catch-Up volunteer Steve Scheffer, the program provided free transportation to its four classrooms. A team of local teachers - including two AFSC placement program veterans who both went on to teaching careers – worked hard to, in Griffin's words, "prepare citizens for better job opportunities."[805]

As foreshadowed by the School Board's constant dismissal of CPE's repeated proposals for a remedial reading program, the public schools took no interest in incorporating Reading in High Gear into the yearly curriculum until handed a federal grant to do so. Consequently, months lapsed between the end of the summer program and the beginning of an academic year program in March 1966. Upon reception of the funding, Superintendent Harper approved the hiring of eight additional teachers, a group of teachers' aides, and an assortment of program support personnel. IER's Marilyn Outlaw served as project director. All students in grades 1-10 participated, and the daily class schedule shifted to provide a concentrated two hours a day for instruction in reading. When the program ended in February 1967, Outlaw was cautiously optimistic. While admitting that younger students progressed more slowly, she cited a significant rise in reading levels among 95% of fifth to tenth graders. Harper predicted that students

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[805] Mary Brown, "Slate Adult Classes For Prince Edward County," *The VOICE*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (November 1965), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; "Adult Reading Classes Begin in PE County," *The VOICE*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (December 1965), ibid; O. Jerome Jackson, "CAP Official Reveals Plans for Massive Educational Program," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 1966), ibid.

who remained in the system would eventually pull themselves up to the levels they would have attained had the closings not interrupted their education. Myron Woolman himself offered no such assurances, only a comment that a minimum of two years of Reading in High Gear would be necessary in order to see significant results. Notably, when federal funding did not prove immediately forthcoming for a second academic year, the Prince Edward County School Board immediately discontinued the program.[806]

As opposed to Operation Catch-Up, Project Head Start was exclusively a summer program, aimed at preparing the county's prospective first graders for their September 1965 entrance into school. Used extensively in Head Start's early years, summer programs bore out program planners' optimistic hypothesis that six to eight week sessions could effectively compensate for years of impoverishment and successfully inoculate participants against future academic and social problems. Caught up in the new emphasis on the cognitive system's openness to change, they cheerfully predicted that the right kind of intervention could raise each child to an elevated intellectual level. At the encouragement of CPE, the Prince Edward Council on Human Relations (PECHR) agreed in the spring of 1965 to make its first venture into action and serve as sponsor for the proposal to OEO. CPE recognized that white leaders' willingness to accept Head Start as a relatively innocuous play-group opportunity for preschoolers rendered the project a good one for a group new to action. Hoping that the skills gained in organizing a non-controversial program might prompt members to expand PECHR's role in the

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[806] O. Jerome Jackson, "CAP Official Reveals Plans for Massive Educational Program," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 1966), ibid; Robert Booker and Larry Hines, "IER Completes Successful Project," *The VOICE*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (April 1967), ibid; Bob Smith, "County's Crippled Generation," *Southern Education Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (July/August 1966): 13-16.

community, they pointed out that VCHR chapters across the state served as sponsors for OEO programs. Taking on the project, PECHR announced its hopes of attracting an interracial student body. Organizers advertised for a project director who possessed "an understanding of the racial climate of this county and a commitment to operate a non-discriminatory program which is sensitive to the needs of both races." They framed their call for teachers as individuals possessing "a desire not to mold 'carbon copies' of more advantaged children, but to encourage the children of the poor to express their own special talents, contributions and personalities."[807]

Deeply committed to community involvement in the program, organizers noted in their application form that they hoped to maximize use of volunteers. Practical recognition that some payment would prove necessary to enable poorer parents to participate, however, led them to request an increased amount of money for staffing. Yet regardless of the fiscal arrangement, they envisioned using high school students as clean-up and fix-up crews and parents as bus drivers, field trip chaperones, recruiters, and janitors. In a further boost to community involvement, they also proposed to host programs for parents such as homemakers' demonstrations and planning classes, citizenship and literacy classes, and legal aid workshops.[808]

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[807] Zigler, "Head Start: Not A Program But An Evolving Concept"; Zigler, "Project Head Start: Success or Failure?," in *Project Head Start: A Legacy of the War on Poverty*, ed. Edward Zigler and Jeanette Valentine (New York: The Free Press, 1979): 495-507. Adams to Moffett and Fairfax, 23 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; Application Form, OEO Community Action Project Application for Project Head Start, 14 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38597, ibid.

[808] Application Form, OEO Community Action Project Application for Project Head Start, 14 April 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38597, ibid.

Once appointing Vera Allen, principal of Mary E. Branch Elementary School #1 as project director, PECHR elected Adams, Griffin and Dr. Moss to positions on the Director's Advisory Committee. The three committee members turned their attention to making contacts with community leaders in each of the six magisterial districts for the purpose of building neighborhood support for the program. Determined not to patronize the segregationist local physicians, Adams contacted the Medical Committee on Human Rights for help in evading the local medical association's ruling that volunteer doctors could administer free public health examinations, but that any follow-up treatment must be referred to local doctors. The School Board, expecting an entirely black enrollment, offered an unprecedented level of cooperation, opening Branch #1 and four of the padlocked black elementary schools and allowing use of any furniture remaining in the buildings. They refused, however, to open any of the formerly white schools. Efforts to attract white enrollment, despite a campaign on part of the "social mogul of Hampden-Sydney" and two other "very proper white ladies," failed miserably.[809]

Classes began on June 28th and ceased on August 20th. As none of the black school buildings besides Branch #1 included kitchen facilities, volunteers transported food to the other centers to provide the children two meals a day. Classes at all the centers except Branch #1 ran from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Children of working parents who lacked competent older siblings at home attended an all-day program at Branch #1. Program curriculum focused on building up children's self-esteem, providing a sense of security, stimulating creativity, and improving communication skills through activities such as story-telling, singing, sharing time, arts and crafts, simple cooking, and science

[809] Adams to Eleanor Eaton, 16 June 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38597, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

experimentation. Organizers also stressed free play and outdoor activities, and in an effort to provide as many new experiences for the children as possible, teachers took their students for walks, picnics, and on field trips to the Farmville post office, fire station, and police station. Avoiding destinations that employed blacks only in menial positions – "subtly teaching a lesson which we wish to avoid" – organizers also took the children to see a traveling science exhibition brought to the county courtesy of Philadelphia's Franklin Institute, to see "Cinderella" at the movie theater, to the Lynchburg Airport, and on a train ride to Crewe. By the end of the summer, organizers felt confident that they had reached nearly all of the county's incoming black first graders.[810]

The End of an Era

Despite the moderate success of Head Start and Operation Catch-Up, overall conditions in the county remained dismal. CPE began to falter as several of its staunchest leaders fled Prince Edward. By June 1965, Tyler Miller and Carl Walters admitted that they could no longer carry the double responsibilities of their academic work and their community activism. Jean and Ellington White, still deeply concerned over the quality of the public schools but unwilling to send their son to the Academy for another year, left the county. After a long deterioration of relations with College Church, Arthur Field

[810] Ibid; Darwyn White, "Headstart," *The VOICE,* Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1965), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Sandra Young, "Impressions of Headstart," *The VOICE*, Vo. 1, No. 3 (28 August 1965), ibid.

resigned and departed. The Walters', the Millers' and the Williamsons' all confessed to Nancy Adams that the upcoming year would be their last in Prince Edward.[811]

In August, Nancy Adams herself departed, bringing to a close five years of intensive AFSC involvement in the county. Connections and relationships endured and AFSC continued to finance scholarships for high school students to attend organization sponsored citizenship camps and seminars, such as an Urban Problems Symposium in Chicago in June 1966 and a Race, Religion and Personality Development Seminar in the South Carolina Sea Islands in April 1967. The decision to close the office did not come easily, for unraveling five years of close intertwinement with the local community raised questions of abandonment. Jean Fairfax, however, noted that despite the ongoing nature of the crisis, AFSC had fulfilled its stated goals for the Prince Edward Community Relations Program: strengthening existing leadership and contributing to the development of new leaders. Years later, she reflected that the organization's vision of capacity building placed limits on what it itself could accomplish. "You hope to build the capacity of people to handle their own situation," she pointed out. "Even though they end up handling it in ways that you may not have anticipated or may not even agree with, you respect their right to do their own thing." Under Nancy Adams, the Community Relations Program labored to build a quality desegregated public school system. By August 1965, the system remained substandard and almost exclusively black, but as Fairfax noted:

> We felt that we had started the process. We could have brought on an entirely different crew of people because the situation was so enormous... There would have been a justification for having, say a five-year program. But thinking of all

[811] Adams to Fairfax and Moffett, 10 August 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38593, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

of the demands on our resources, and the fact that we had brought it to a certain stage, it made sense for us to leave.[812]

The years in the county proved trying, expensive, occasionally exhilarating and often frustrating for AFSC and its staff members. The search for the "spark of the divine" in Prince Edward's staunch segregationists and supine "moderates" exposed the seedy racial underside of the county's lofty rhetoric of constitutionalism, but also lent an unprecedented courage to those longing for a more equitable and compassionate way of life. Consciously viewing themselves as civil rights "technicians" rather than activists, AFSC staff members turned their attention toward bolstering community institutions, investing in local leadership, and staying the course in one place, rather than departing to begin a new campaign elsewhere. Unlike many "outside" organizations, they did not tell local people what to do and how to do it. Staff members worked instead to provide the institutional framework for indigenous protest.

Though often frustrated with the attitudes, ideas or preferences of local people, they worked hard to stay within their role, offering guidance and assistance, and accepting residents' right to disregard it. This commitment and respect deeply impressed those they came to assist. During an August 1962 mass meeting at First Baptist, a long parade of esteemed individuals and organizations stood up to address members of the black community. Though the group included S.W. Tucker and many leading Virginia State Conference NAACP officials, audience members reserved their most enthusiastic applause - and their standing ovation – for Griffin and the AFSC. Harry Boyte

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[812] Robert Booker, "Three PE Teenagers Attend Seminar," *The VOICE*, Vol. 3, No.2 (April 1967), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Harold White, "Seminar Introduces Urban Complications," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (June 1966); Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 13.

interpreted this affection not only as a thanks for AFSC's work, but also an indication of how much it meant to the black community to have its struggle validated as courageous and important enough to warrant the active participation of an international, Nobel prize-winning organization.[813]

A tireless advocate for the children of the county, AFSC confronted segregationists and federal officials alike with the harsh reality of the situation and the anguished faces of the young people trapped in the middle. Creative programs such as the Emergency Placement Program and Citizens for Public Education cast a shadow far longer than their years of operation, instilling amongst their participants courage, leadership skills, organizational abilities, academic strengths, broader horizons, and a lifelong commitment to battling injustice. At the same time, the Quaker commitment to "speaking truth to power" fueled energy for the long and arduous fight, ensuring that at least one person always remained willing to pull together a group to go back for another round with the white power structure. CPE President Carl Walters unconsciously summed up the true impact of AFSC's years in the county in May 1965, noting in a letter to Jean Fairfax:

> It should not have gone without saying how deeply indebted the people of this county are to the AFSC in innumerable ways, past and present...When we say "we," we often mean Nancy originally and throughout in provocation, encouragement, support and just plain laborious toil in committees, in homes, over typewriter and memograph [sic] machine. I was wrong when I said that at the beginning of this year CPE grew out of a number of us who shared common convictions and who "just sort of found each other." Nancy found us all and

[813] Boyte to Fairfax, 2 August 1962, 1962 Box, Folder 38438, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

brought us together. It is perfectly safe to say that we would not be what we are, nor could we have done what we have done without Nancy.[814]

The departure from Prince Edward did not mark an end to AFSC's days as a civil rights pioneer. Jean Fairfax turned her attention to the enormous difficulties confronting black parents in Mississippi who enrolled their children in majority-white schools in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. Greatly expanding Bill Bagwell and Charles Davis's North Carolina-based School Desegregation program, AFSC staff members fanned out across Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida, Missouri, and Virginia, working closely with lawyers from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to inform communities of their rights under Title VI and hold the federal government accountable for enforcing the law.[815] In the early 1970's, AFSC desegregation and urban education programs blossomed across Chicago, San Francisco and Pasadena. Staff members with the Southeastern Public Education Program worked from 1968 to 1980 to improve public education through clarifying citizen rights in relation to school systems, educating parents to become forces for change, pressuring local, state, and federal government officials to maintain quality school systems, and addressing issues of race, class, and sexism in schools. But Prince Edward always remained with those who experienced it firsthand. As Nancy Adams told the 1965 Annual Meeting a few months after leaving the county, "I think it will be many years

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[814] Carl Walters, Jr. to Fairfax, 5 May 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38594, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[815] Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandated the withdrawal of federal funds from institutions practicing discrimination. Most of the desegregation achieved in southern public schools throughout the 1970's resulted from its strict enforcement.

before AFSC or any of us who are concerned about the dignity of man will be able to forget Prince Edward County, Virginia."[816]

The departure of the AFSC marked the end of the most focused, concentrated era of the crisis. While many of those active in the earlier stages of the struggle left the county by 1966, those who remained continued to fight. When the second student strike at Moton High broke out in April 1969, it signified the beginning of an important generational shift, as those most directly impacted by the closings began to assume more adult leadership positions in the community. This "second generation" carried the struggle forward, different in focus, different in framework, and organized around different "enemies," but at heart the same crusade for justice that originally animated Barbara Johns and her classmates.

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[816] American Friends Service Committee, Timeline of Public Education Work, Hhttp://www.afsc.org/about/public-ed-timeline.htmH; Adams, Draft Speech to the AFSC Annual Meeting, 30 October 1965, 1965 Box, Folder 38596.

CHAPTER 10

THE NEXT GENERATION CARRIES ON: 1966-2007

On April 23, 1969, exactly eighteen years after the walkout that plunged Prince Edward County into the maelstrom of the nationwide battle over school desegregation, the nearly all-black student body at the reopened Robert Russa Moton High School staged another strike. As in 1951, the teenagers' action attempted to break an inequitable stalemate – a hostile standoff with the school board. Although the immediate precipitating factors included the firing of popular young teacher and the dismissal of a School Board advisory committee, the strike nonetheless tapped into deeper currents of unrest. Students and parents alike remained passionately dissatisfied with the school system and its arrangement of whites on top, blacks on the bottom.

Administrators maintained their practice of sending their own children to the Academy, and the all-white School Board continued to treat parents and citizens' groups as nuisances, ignoring any and all suggestions for improvement of the schools. Beginning in the fall of 1965, the School Board instituted a program of textbook rental, forcing parents to pay one quarter of the cost of their children's schoolbooks. They exempted families documented to be on public assistance, but the new fee nonetheless placed a large burden on parents of multiple children. One mother noted that she would continue to send her six children to school until the time she could make a payment, but acknowledged that "it isn't much use in sending them for long if they don't have any books." Superintendent Harper defended the policy, arguing that 75% of Virginia

schools employed a textbook rental program and noting piously that, "parents must learn that they have certain responsibilities in providing an education for their children."[817]

An editorial in *The VOICE* sharply rebutted this argument, calling the plan an attempt, not at savings, but rather at harassment. Pointing out that textbook rental would save at most $15,000 a year, a fraction of the $165,000 allocated for tuition grants, the editorial staff noted pointedly that, "The fact that so many students enrolled and are working hard in Catch-Up and Head Start shows that parents and children in our community really want an education. By making parents rent school books for their children, the county officials show that they couldn't care less." Once again, L.F. Griffin stepping forward, convincing First Baptist's Board of Deacons to allow him to take money from the Minister's Discretionary Fund to cover rental fees for poorer parents. By October, the fund paid out nearly $320 in textbook fees.[818]

The insufficiency of guidance services at Moton forced Harriet White and the Operation Catch-Up volunteers who mounted the Summer 1965 supplementary college preparation and scholarship aid program to provide a year-round support system. With the assistance of the New York City-based National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students (NSSFNS), White and Robert Benton, a College of William & Mary instructor and Catch-Up veteran, struggled to provide the information, encouragement, and aid necessary to make college attendance an attainable goal for Moton juniors and

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[817] Leslie F. Griffin, Jr. and James E. Ghee, Jr., "Prince Edward Students Must Rent Textbooks," *The VOICE*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1965).

[818] Editorial, ibid; Donzella White, "Funds Available for Book Rental," *The VOICE*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1965).

seniors.[819] In weekly afternoon sessions at First Baptist, they offered tutoring services in mathematics and English, distributed information on financial aid and scholarships, assisted prospective applicants with their paperwork, and provided free opportunities for students to take practice versions of college entrance exams.[820]

In a pattern very similar to that of 1951, parents and students exhausted all the normal channels of approach to the School Board, which continually responded to their myriad of concerns with repeated denials that problems existed. Etta Lee, a black member of CPE, noted in 1966 that:

> The grown-ups, like the children, are frustrated and bewildered. We can't sit down with the whites and talk about problems. Everything is so elusive. We make a request for a school improvement, like hiring a psychologist or introducing an art course, and the answer is, 'We'll let you know.' Eventually comes a letter of refusal. After a while, you give up.

Angry student leaders vented their frustration in editorials in *The VOICE*, maintaining that the lack of school-sponsored college and career planning services, the deplorably low number of college prep classes offered at the high school – some seniors spent up to four hours of every school day in study halls – the poorly equipped science labs, the chaos, and the oversize, clumsily grouped classes rendered a diploma from Moton practically worthless. Others leveled criticisms at War on Poverty efforts in the county, revealing a sophisticated political analysis forged in years of conflict. Intimately familiar with

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[819] The National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students, established in 1946. focuses on broadening educational opportunities and providing financial assistance for minority students seeking admission to post-secondary institutions. Its programs include a computerized Guidance Information System and public Student-College Interview Sessions that acquaint students with college admission requirements, scholarship information, and program prerequisites.

[820] Otis Jackson, "Scholarship Aid Available for Students Here," *The VOICE*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1965).

powerlessness and marginalization, members of "the crippled generation" charged leaders of the Prince Edward Community Action Group with hypocrisy, exclusivity, and a basic lack of respect for the people they purported to serve.[821]

Pointing out that the group had not held a public meeting in nearly a year and had planned, conducted and discontinued the previous winter's adult education project without any input from the community, the students argued that "there has been little involvement of the poor in Prince Edward County's War on Poverty." Surely, they maintained, the problem did not lie in a shortage of potential participants. After all, 79% of the county's black population and 32% of the white earned less than $3000 a year. Going on to criticize the leadership – Griffin included – for not expending greater effort to encourage poor whites to participate, they also condemned the sixty-nine member group for accepting Robert Taylor as a co-chair. "How does a person who holds a position of some authority in the private, segregated Prince Edward Academy also hold a position of authority in a local fight on poverty?" they queried. "What does such a person know of poverty?" Their criticism perhaps contributed to Taylor's decision to resign the co-chairmanship in the spring of 1968, leaving Griffin as the sole chair.[822]

At the June 1966 budget hearing, the School Board and the Board of Supervisors further stepped up their campaign of malicious budgetary neglect, shrewdly approving a larger budget for the schools, but supplying the funds through the county's estimated share of the state sales tax levy. The tireless C.G.G. Moss, one of the few dissenters to

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[821] Joseph P. Blank, "The Lost Years," *Look*, Vol. 30, No. 24 (29 November 1966): 71-75; Editorial, "Moton Students Handicapped," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 1966); Editorial, "Moton Handicaps Students," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (May 1966); Editorial, "Poverty Is For the Poor," ibid.

[822] Editorial, "Poverty Is For the Poor," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (May 1966).

continue to haunt the budget hearings, carefully unpacked the figures, chastising the Supervisors for cutting the county contribution to the schools by $52,390 despite the experience of 1965-66, when the school system had to request more money from the state in order to finish out the school year. Moss's employer, Longwood College, maintained its administrative hostility toward desegregation, rejecting a proposal for an on-campus Upward Bound program in the summer of 1967 on the grounds that it would have involved black students and consequently "caused embarrassment to the college."[823]

However, by the late 1960's, President Frank Lankford's successor, Dr. James H. Newman, openly acknowledged the school situation as the primary impediment to the college's ability to attract new faculty members. Convinced that an on-campus laboratory school would both enhance the quality of education accorded Longwood students and provide an alternative to both the public schools and the Academy for faculty children, administrators requested funds for a laboratory school program from the General Assembly. When the John P. Wynne Campus School opened in 1969, it received so many applications that some children placed on the waiting list at birth were not admitted as first-graders. Though the majority of the two hundred Wynne students were faculty children, local African American children comprised 15-20% of the student body. White liberals who considered the Academy morally repugnant, but feared sending

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[823] C.G.G. Moss, "Federal Monster – Yes, When Convenient," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (July 1966); Susan Jacoby, "Prince Edward County: Back Where They Started," *Washington Post POTOMAC* (24 March 1968), School Closings Clipping File, LU Archives.

their children to the financially starved, academically shaky, heavily black public schools found a temporary solution in the laboratory school.[824]

While faculty families and a few blacks flocked to the laboratory school and the majority of whites continued to struggle to meet the ever-rising Academy tuition – in some families, children went without shoes every summer in order to meet the fall's Foundation bill – the black community struggled to find a way to challenge the inadequacy of the public schools. As in 1951, the students themselves finally seized the initiative. As before, they chose not to discuss their decision with their parents, but rather sought out Griffin for his opinion and advice. Complete with a list of demands including a new superintendent, an expanded curriculum, black representation on the School Board, and a more stringent evaluation process for teachers, they struck. With the example of 1951 hanging before them and a combination of anger, determination, and courage forged in the crucible of the closings, they consciously undertook to leave their own mark on Prince Edward County history.[825]

The chain of events immediately precipitating the strike began at the School Board meeting on April 14, 1969, when Ray Moore stood to read an incendiary statement directed toward the eight African Americans comprising the School Board advisory committee. Appointed in September 1968 after a district-wide student demonstration demanding Harper's dismissal, the advisory committee constituted an uneasy

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[824] Robert Holland, "Longwood Faculty Woes Put on Schools," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, n.d., clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Wolters, p. 122; Jennifer E. Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside: A Desegregation Drama in Five Acts," 19 U. Ark. Little Rock L.J. 327 (Spring 1997).

[825] Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside"; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

compromise from the start. In an effort to restore order and move on with the school year, pupils and parents agreed to tolerate Harper for the remainder of the year, while the all-white Board agreed to accept input from a black advisory committee. At this April meeting, however, Board members complained that their new advisors provided "an unbalanced view" of the school situation and announced a reorganization of the committee – summarily dismissing four members and appointing four new ones from the community.[826]

In the same statement, they also pledged to remove "disruptive influences" from the schools and while rejecting a traditional four-year contract for Harper, expressed their desire to reappoint him for a shorter period of time. Incensed, all eight advisory committee members walked out. In their minds, the decision to summarily dissolve the group represented nothing less than a breach of trust and a naked attempt to assemble a committee that could be easily controlled. Raising the level of tension another notch, the School Board announced that it would not renew the contract of Moton English teacher T. Burwell Robinson, Jr. Pointing to what it considered an increasing disciplinary problem at the high school, board members termed Robinson a "disruptive influence" deliberately exacerbating tension in the building. Like Susan Ferris before him, the twenty-four year old Robinson was white. As a Hampden-Sydney graduate, he possessed a deep familiarity with the background underlying the situation in the county, but unlike most whites, chose to meet it head on, break "polite" silence, and force the issue into the arena of public discussion. His students deeply respected his genuine interest in their

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[826] John Clement, "300 Moton Students March to Farmville, Stage Sit-In," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 April 1969; John Clement, "Prince Edward: Attempt at 'Balanced Viewpoint' Tipped Scales, Sparked Protests," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 April 1969.

lives and willingness to allow them to use his classroom as a platform to express their anger at the injustice perpetrated upon them. Frustrated with what they termed "patronizing white do-gooders," they embraced Robinson for his sincerity and honesty.[827]

When word reached the student body that Robinson would not return the following year, student leaders organized a sit-in in the school auditorium. For two days, approximately three hundred students – roughly half the student body – filed into the auditorium at the start of morning classes and remained there the entire day, emerging only for lunch. Principal A. O. Hosley, whose personal sympathies remain unknown, repeatedly assured reporters and School Board members alike that, aside from a few instances of heckling non-participants, the protesters behaved in a quiet and orderly fashion. One white student joined the group the first day, and many passed the time studying for midterms. Robinson, who maintained public reticence throughout the events, did tell the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that although he had not encouraged the students to demonstrate, "I cannot avoid being grateful for their vote of confidence."[828]

After two days of this, the School Board, again without explaining its reasoning, dismissed Robinson from the Moton faculty effective immediately. On the third day, striking students adopted a more confrontational approach, marching the two miles into downtown Farmville to conduct a sit-in on the Prince Edward County Courthouse lawn. Fifteen white collegians from Robinson's alma mater joined them as they sang and

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[827] John Clement, "Prince Edward Teacher Dismissed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 23 April 1969; John Clement, "Prince Edward: Attempt at 'Balanced Viewpoint' Tipped Scales, Sparked Protests," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 April 1969; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[828] John Clement, "Prince Edward Teacher Dismissed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 23 April 1969.

clapped their way up Route 15, chanting, "Harper can't turn us around; we're not gonna let old Harper turn us around; we're gonna keep right on walkin' till we get T.B. back." Neither Superintendent Harper nor any members of the School B oard emerged from their offices in the building to speak with the students, but aside from a brief lunch provided by members of First Baptist, the group remained on the lawn until the end of the school day.[829]

Meanwhile, each of the eight individuals appointed to the reorganized School Board advisory committee refused to serve. In a letter to the Board, Griffin stated that only the reinstatement of the original committee would bring a halt to the demonstrations. The students, however, demanded broader concessions. Senior Jacqueline White countered School Board attorney John Kay's request for no further actions with the rejoinder that "we are not going to stop until we get what we want...We want Robinson back, we want a black representative on the school board and Harper, we want him out of here." Members of the School Board finally came to Moton on Thursday, April 24 to meet with student leaders, but only to deliver an ultimatum: return to classes or face suspension. Board members undoubtedly read the newspapers, which in April 1969 brimmed with stories of campus turmoil across the nation. Though no record explaining members' reasoning exists, it seems logical to hypothesize that they resented the growing

[829] John Clement, "300 Moton Students March to Farmville, Stage Sit-In," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 April 1969.

spirit of entitlement, confrontation, and autonomy characterizing the student movement and deliberately chose to assert authority rather than negotiate.[830]

During the week of the Moton strike, racial unrest erupted into demonstrations at American University and Princeton University. Black students at Colgate University (Hamilton, NY) occupied the faculty club, demanding its use as a black cultural center. After the Afro-American League seized the student center at neighboring Cornell University and armed themselves against a group of whites they considered hostile, President James Perkins authorized campus police to inspect dormitories and fraternity houses and confiscate all student weapons. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the premier voice of sixties' radicalism among white collegians, staged a demonstration in Cambridge protesting Harvard University's real estate policies. At Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University, police conducting a narcotics raid used smoke bombs and chemical agents to break up a crowd of student onlookers. Puerto Rican and black students at City College (now City University) of New York occupied and sealed off half the campus as part of their demand for a separate school. High school students in Chicago, New York City, and Long Island engaged in a series of demonstrations that quickly turned violent, injuring protesters and policemen alike. The black power movement approached its zenith, intersecting with an increasingly physically confrontational current of student protest to make educational institutions a frontline in the battle to dismantle the structures of power defining American society. [831]

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[830] John Clement, "Prince Edward Schools Closed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 April 1969; John Clement, "Prince Edward Schools Scheduled to Reopen," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 29 April 1969.

[831] "40 Negroes Occupy Colgate Faculty Club," *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* 26 April 1969.

In Virginia itself, Hampton Institute students rebelled against the school's conservative board of trustees. Demanding a general upgrade in the quality of education offered at the state's oldest black institution, a pay increase for faculty members, and changes in the college's hiring, firing, and tenure procedure, nearly seven hundred students boycotted classes and a smaller number occupied the administration building. When the trustees declared the school closed and ordered students to leave campus, many refused to vacate. Black students at Williamsburg's James Blair High School, claiming the exclusion of African Americans from full participation in extra-curricular activities, also launched their own class boycott and sit-in in the school auditorium. Though they did not issue formal demands, they did elect a committee to express their concerns to the principal and superintendent.[832]

No doubt horrified by other administrators' attempts to negotiate – terming moderation an insufficient response to a breakdown in discipline – members of the Prince Edward County School Board took a harsher line. The protesters, however, remained unmoved by the threat of suspension. Nearly two hundred marched back downtown Farmville to force a meeting with Harper. Barred at the courthouse door from entering as a group, they elected a delegation to question him in person about Robinson's dismissal, but received only a stock response citing confidential "personnel issues." At the same time, those remaining at the high school stormed the principal's office. Locking themselves inside, they refused to allow Hosley to enter. Accompanied by the School Board, the principal left the building. The students held the office for another hour,

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[832] "Students at Hampton Hold Campus Building," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 April 1969; "Dissidents Ignore Offer at Hampton," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 April 1969; John T. Kinnier, "100 at Blair Stage Sit-in and Boycott," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 April 1969.

making plans to spend the night, until an announcement came over the radio that county schools would close at 2:00 PM and remain shuttered until an emergency meeting could be convened with parents the following Monday evening. After hearing the announcement, they emerged from the office and met their downtown compatriots for a strategy session at First Baptist, at which time a majority of those present voted to suspend demonstrations until after the emergency meeting.[833]

Both sides used Friday's school cancellation to gather their thoughts, discuss their strategies, and speak to the press. Harper agreed to a private meeting with Robinson, but both refused to comment on their conversation. Ray Moore admitted to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that "for fair representation, a Negro should be on the board," but argued that the currently constituted group should be allowed to complete its term without disruption. Claiming a concern for education not often apparent in the Board's actions, Moore insisted that none of the issues at stake could possibly outrank the importance of reopening the schools and returning the students to their classrooms. Youth advisor Darwyn White, a 22 year old Moton alumnus, told reporters that students would "possibly" accept Robinson's dismissal if the Board would simply explain the reasoning behind it, but would remain hard-line on the appointment of a black School Board member and the reinstatement of the original advisory board.[834]

The Monday night meeting, attended by more than seven hundred people, contained a few surprises, namely Ray Moore's declaration that he would not seek or

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[833] John Clement, "Prince Edward Schools Closed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 April 1969.

[834] John Clement, "Prince Edward Quiet; Schools Remain Closed," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 April 1969; John Clement, "Prince Edward: Attempt at 'Balanced Viewpoint' Tipped Scales, Sparked Protests," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 27 April 1969.

accept reappointment to the Board after the June expiration of his current term, potentially opening the door for an African American replacement. For the most part, however, it fell along predictable lines. Announcing a Tuesday reopening, Board members promised to readmit demonstrators "without penalty." School Board attorney John Kay, however, relayed that Governor Mills E. Godwin, Jr. had empowered him to take steps to protect students who wished to attend class by barring demonstrators from school grounds and prohibiting them from interfering with the education of their peers. Darwyn White's younger sister Jacqueline, as a child considered a "timid little girl," faced Kay without fear, questioning the hint of threat in his remarks. Assuring him that "we will go on even if we don't graduate," she sat down to enthusiastic applause from her peers. As the end of the year approached, however. and the Board began the process of seeking a new superintendent, students accepted the decision to replace Harper as a victory and eventually returned to classes.[835]

A Decade of Change: The 1970s

Though not completely successful in achieving all its aims, the 1969 strike served as a watershed moment in Prince Edward school politics. The School Trustee Electoral Board quickly appointed two blacks to take over the seats occupied by Moore and another outgoing white member, boosting African American representation on the school board from 0% to 25%. Though neither James J. Holmes nor Dr. N.P. Miller (AFSC's landlord) had school age children, and all their white compatriots continued to send their own to the Academy, the appointment ushered in a new age. Clarence Penn, hired in the

[835] John Clement, "Prince Edward Schools Scheduled to Reopen," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 29 April 1969; Foster and Foster, p. 55.

wake of the strike to replace the hapless Hosley, noted in 1973 that "the black school board members have contributed greatly to having two points of view discussed." The students' outspokenness forced many whites, including some elites, to admit that conditions in the public schools were simply unacceptable. Uncomfortably aware that the Academy's continually increasing tuition rates might soon outpace many residents' ability to pay, thus forcing white children back into the county school system, they slowly began to support the idea that the public schools must be improved, even at the price of an increase in local taxes. Most significantly, the combination of the publicity and chaos resulting from the strike with a petition signed by over one thousand black parents finally forced the School Board to bow to popular demand and dismiss Superintendent Harper.[836]

His replacement was Ronald Perry, a young Pennsylvanian introduced to Prince Edward's situation while teaching in the UVA School of Education. Perry took a gamble on the county despite warnings from friends and colleagues that assuming the superintendency of such a troubled district would constitute professional suicide. Though community opinion diverged on the question of whether Perry and his assistant Frank Barham invested too much energy in undermining the Academy, most observers agreed that the quality of education in the Prince Edward Public Schools improved under their direction.[837]

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[836] Patricia Pine, "You Can See the Change in Prince Edward," *American Education*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1970): 24-28; Kitty Terjen, "Cradle of Resistance: Prince Edward County Today," *New South*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1973): 18-27.

[837] Wolters, p. 117; Patricia Pine, "You Can See the Change in Prince Edward," *American Education*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1970): 24-28; Dave Burton, "Departing Educator

Each building in the district achieved accreditation from the state Department of Education and Moton High won additional accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. When Hampden-Sydney and Longwood students again proposed a tutorial program, unlike their predecessors, Perry and Barham embraced the idea. This increased contact with students broke down the colleges' refusal to officially work with the public schools, and Longwood and Hampden-Sydney lifted the restrictions against sending student teachers into the system. Drawing heavily upon contacts with UVA and the Virginia Department of Education, they brought in specialists to improve quality of instruction through inservice programs, curriculum workshops, and evening graduate courses in audiovisual instruction, educational testing and reading instruction. In 1969-70, 75% of the instructional staff took at least one college course, and the superintendents dismissed three teachers for ineptitude.[838]

A major expansion of the special education and remedial reading programs alleviated some of the desperation in the classrooms, and Perry and Barham's visibility at school events, regular presence in the schools, and commitment to an open-door policy with students pleased faculty, parents, and students alike. They met with strike leaders in September to discuss student concerns and priorities, and instituted a monthly meeting with two student representatives from each class in the system. New high school principal Clarence Penn, who came to Prince Edward from Charlotte County, modeled a similar approachability. Strike leader Edward Morton noted that, "We get a fair shake this year. The principal will listen to you and tell you whether he thinks you're right or

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Proud of Prince Edward Schools," *Richmond News Leader*, n.d., clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[838] Patricia Pine, "You Can See the Change in Prince Edward," *American Education*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1970): 24-28.

wrong. If he thinks you're wrong, he'll tell you why." His involvement with the strike profoundly affected Morton's future. A few years later, Burwell Robinson, working with a special education program in Richmond, remembered his former student and recruited him for a position with the program. Morton went on to a long career with the Richmond Public Schools, devoting his energies to teaching and counseling learning disabled children.[839]

Devoting far more attention than their predecessors to attracting federal funds, Perry and Barham won an $82,000 grant for a multimedia communication skills program for primary students and secured funds to open the county's first public kindergarten. Under their administration, white enrollment rose substantially (unlike Harper, Perry sent his own children to the public schools), partially because the duo chose to actively enforce the General Assembly's 1968 reinstatement of the state compulsory attendance law. In an attempt to erase the equation of "public school" and "black school," they also presided over a somewhat unpopular comprehensive name changing process in which every building in the district – including those named for notable African Americans – assumed a new regional name. Mary E. Branch School #2 became Farmville Elementary and Moton High took on the name Prince Edward County High School.[840]

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[839] Ibid; Carolyn Rice, "Prince Edward County: New Mood in the Public Schools," *Virginia Journal of Education*, Vol. 63, No. 5 (January 1970): 18-20; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

[840] Patricia Pine, "You Can See the Change in Prince Edward," *American Education*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1970): 24-28; Dave Burton, "Departing Educator Proud of Prince Edward Schools," *Richmond News Leader*, n.d., clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Susan Jacoby, "Prince Edward County: Back Where They Started," *Washington Post POTOMAC* (24 March 1968): 22-23, 27-28, 31; Carolyn Rice, "Prince

Nevertheless, an acrimonious debate broke out in 1971-72 around issues of black power and the desirability of maintaining a heavily African American system. By the spring of 1972, when Perry resigned to take a position in Bergen County, New Jersey, his relations with the community had cooled considerably. Resenting black criticism that he "loaded" the schools with white teachers and neglected the teaching of black history and racial awareness, the superintendent charged that those who lectured him for making the schools too attractive to whites were "as wrong as the most radical white segregationists." Many blacks, for their part, resented the equation of black nationalism with white supremacy. Others deeply resented Perry's insistence on changing building names, resenting the sacrifice of a piece of local black history in the name of enticing whites back to the public school system. Serious tensions over community control and black identity marred the latter part of his administration. In his resignation speech to the School Board, Perry denounced what he considered an increasing wave of discrimination against whites and lambasted black community groups' insistence on exercising a say in the employment of new teachers. These statements ushered in a vitriolic public comment period punctuated by what the *Farmville Herald* termed "insulting verbal exchanges."[841]

Perry's successor, James Anderson, came to Prince Edward from neighboring Buckingham County, where as principal of Buckingham High School, he prodded his district into being the first majority white one in the Southside to compete against Prince Edward County High School's athletic teams. When an African American girl stood first

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Edward County: New Mood in the Public Schools," *Virginia Journal of Education*, Vol. 63, No. 5 (January 1970): 18-20.

[841] Dave Burton, "Departing Educator Proud of Prince Edward Schools," *Richmond News Leader*, n.d., clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Wolters, p. 117-119.

in Buckingham's 1969 senior class, the superintendent suggested that the principal use a different method to select the valedictorian. When Anderson refused, the Buckingham School Board did not renew his contract, publicly ascribing his dismissal to the fact that he attended Governor Linwood Holton's inaugural ball. Holton, a Republican, was a racial moderate who encouraged Virginia in his 1970 inaugural address to "be a model for race relations in America." Transferred upstairs to a "paper-pushing" job the following year, he hesitantly accepted Clarence Penn's encouragement to apply for the vacant Prince Edward superintendency. Taking over in 1972, he remained at the helm until his retirement in 1997, sustained by substantial community support. Like Perry, he sent his own children to the public schools, but his public disavowal of any deliberate intent to build up white enrollment pleased partisans on both sides of the racial line.[842]

Anderson threw his energy into improving academic performance, which still ranked among the lowest in the state in 1972. With the assistance of curriculum director and long-time community leader Vera Allen, he instituted ability grouping and tracking. Though these policies proved controversial in many districts, they were largely accepted in Prince Edward as a necessary tool for restoring order to classrooms and allowing all children to reach their own individual potential at their own pace. Thanks to Linwood Holton's "minimum standards of quality" policy, which fixed a bottom limit on the amount of local funds counties must allocate for education, the Board of Supervisors finally found itself legally obligated to substantially increase the public school budget. The local tax rate consequently jumped from $1.60 per $100 valuation to $2.80 in 1973. When students faltered on standardized tests, teachers made remedial assistance and

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[842] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

practice tests regular elements of their classroom routine, and administrators invited groups of parents to review the test questions to determine if any contained racial bias. Clarence Penn, however, resented white liberals' continuing use of the neighboring Cumberland County schools as a high school alternative for their children. Rebutting the charges that Prince Edward County High School extensive remedial program prevented it from offering advanced coursework, he criticized professorial parents for underestimating the system's academic diversity.[843]

Many of the college-affiliated parents, however, simultaneously underwent their own crises of conscience. Longwood College's Wynne School provided a positive experience for their children, combining strong academics with controlled integration. But as it served only grades 1-7, the Wynne School ultimately only delayed the choice between private and public education, particularly as the popularity of the Cumberland County alternative began to decline as an unacceptable compromise. In 1974, after a great deal of soul-searching and discussion, a group of faculty families under the leadership of Longwood's Patton Lockwood and Gerald Graham collectively enrolled their high school age children at Prince Edward County High. Not long after, the Wynne School closed its doors and Superintendent Anderson convinced the presidents of both Longwood and Hampden-Sydney to send their children to the public schools.[844]

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[843] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27; Kitty Terjen, "Cradle of Resistance: Prince Edward County Today," *New South*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1973): 18-27; Wolters, p. 119-121.

[844] Wolters, p. 122; R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

Many commentators observed that the entrance of a substantial group of professors' children into the public schools legitimized the return to public education, prompting other white families to embrace the system. As the Farmville economy expanded and diversified throughout the decade, increasing numbers of new residents flowed into the county. Largely unfamiliar with the history of the school crisis, uninterested in policing the boundaries of segregation, and unwilling to make the financial sacrifices necessary to meet Academy tuition, a significant number chose the public schools for their children. By the end of the decade, whites constituted nearly 25% of the district's 2200 students.[845]

Surrounded on all sides by the weight of the past, black and white students found their relationships complicated and unpredictable in the early years. Lacking experience in dealing with each other in a school situation and established codes to guide their interaction, and often angry or fearful, they struggled to find patterns to normalize the situation. When Edward Morton returned from his sister's home in Pennsylvania to re-enroll at Moton in 1964, he resented all whites. "The bitterness was there and they could see it," he acknowledged. "But we just kept it cool. I think that, if people really went off, Farmville would have burned right up." Charles Herndon, only nine years old when the schools reopened, remembered more open conflict. Though his teacher mother continually preached the importance of judging people as individuals rather than races, the television footage of Birmingham and Selma, combined with the assassination of Dr. King and the situation in Prince Edward, kindled a fierce anger in the young boy. Taking his militance with him to school, he and his friends made life difficult for their white

[845] Wolters, p. 122; Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside"; John Egerton, "A Gentlemen's Fight," *American Heritage*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (August/September 1979): 56-65.

classmates. "We were in charge now," he recalled years later. "None of us hung with the whites. We would ridicule them. We would beat them up." Some of the anger kept on a tight leash during the closings boiled over in these early years of integration. When gangs of whites harassed black youth, some black teenagers retaliated by vandalizing Academy buildings, throwing rocks and bottles at its buses, and targeting whites walking alone.[846]

Strained as those early years might have been, the desegregated schools did force day-to-day interaction between races, which in the end returned Herndon to his mother's policy of judging people as individuals. As he relayed to filmmakers Laurie and Ken Hoen, his attitudes began to change the day a small, skinny white boy, a perpetual target for bullies, threw down his books and attacked his tormentor, an enormous black football star. Herndon watched in amazement, filled with admiration for anybody who dared fight a bully who intimidated the entire school. When he began to talk to the boy, he discovered that they had similar interests. Before long, they found themselves friends. Though Herndon still considered his new friend an exception among whites, their relationship instigated the shift that led him as an adult to hypothesize that fear of those from different racial backgrounds is rooted in ignorance and lack of contact.[847]

Some white students had positive experiences. Victoria Hensley, who graduated in 1970, quickly overcame her initial feeling of discomfort and threw herself into school activities, becoming more a part of her new school community than she had been at the Academy. Kate Young, the white valedictorian of the class of 1979, had a difficult first

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[846] Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid.

[847] Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid.

year. She joined the school band, but felt ignored. The academic subjects, however, presented a larger problem. "I wasn't used to a situation where students disliked you if you wouldn't pretend you were dumb," she told historian Ronald Wolters in 1980. Robin Lockwood, the daughter of the Longwood professor who spearheaded the white enrollment campaign of 1974, also noticed a pervasive anti-academic attitude, observing that the majority of students thought it was "cool" not to care about schoolwork. Like Young, she felt profoundly resented her first year, cursed when she got on the school bus and frozen off the basketball team. Lockwood, Young, and Charles Herndon's friend's experiences significantly paralleled those of black students integrating majority-white schools, suggesting that harassment, at a high school level, often derived from resentment of the "other" and fear of losing control as much as specific racial attitutdes.[848]

Both Young and Lockwood, however, found themselves more accepted as black students grew accustomed to their presence. As white enrollment expanded, black and white students attended the same dances, joined the same clubs, and mingled amicably in the hallways. Though the races tended to cluster in the cafeteria and spent little time together outside of school, by the time she graduated, Robin Lockwood had so many African American friends that she joined Virginia Tech's Black Students Union as the only white member. After her freshman year at Massachusetts' elite Smith College, Kate Young expressed gratitude for her high school experience, noting that it prepared her to cope with a diverse world. Though high school principal Bill Townes noted in 1980 that he could not recall ever seeing an interracial couple at a school function, white student

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[848] Patricia Pine, "You Can See the Change in Prince Edward," *American Education*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (1970): 24-28; Wolters, p. 123.

Margot Rogers attended the junior prom with an African American boy only a few years later.[849]

Margot Rogers and her family represented the new generation of Prince Edward residents. After years of faculty families avoiding the county due to the school situation, Rogers' parents enthusiastically embraced an opportunity to come to Hampden-Sydney in 1975. Though well aware of the county's history, the Rogers's were "comfortable being minorities." For seven years, Bob Rogers served Boston University's Hillel House as the only gentile faculty member teaching religion. After leaving Boston University, the family relocated a few miles to Newton College of the Sacred Heart (Newton, MA), where Rogers took on the mantle of the only Protestant in the Religion Department. When the time came for him to seek a new position, Gretchen Rogers noted that, "There were Catholics, Protestants, Jews where we were, but the small African American community was wiped out by the Massachusetts Turnpike. Newton had very little integration. We wanted a fuller experience for ourselves and our kids." Upon relocation, fourth grader Margot and her older sister enrolled in the public schools, and Bob and Gretchen joined the local coalition working to secure the appointment of School Board candidates focused on the public schools rather than the Academy.[850]

Though Margot had good teachers in her new school, she felt somewhat isolated until joining the band in seventh grade. Though she was the only white member, the other musicians quickly accepted her presence, and from that point on, the band became her

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[849] Wolters, p. 123-124; R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

[850] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

community. Several years later, however, during a Christmas parade down Main Street Farmville, Rogers came face to face with the brutality of racism. A group of white men followed her down the parade route, jeering and shouting out taunts of "nigger-lover." The fact that the experience took her off guard – "it was such a shock, it was something I didn't expect" – suggests that racial politics in Farmville underwent a significant shift between the late 1960's and the early 1980's. But the incident also demonstrates that racism and resentment lingered, albeit in a less obvious manner. Rogers' relationship with her black friends, however, generally more accustomed to racial taunts, survived unscathed. Over the next few days, several band members offered empathy and understanding. The boys "who were aware of the fact that I was in a position to draw attention made it clear that they were sympathetic and would look out for me. I felt very protected." By late high school, her closest circle of friends included both African Americans and whites and she did not bat an eye at attending the junior prom with a black date and the senior prom with a white one.[851]

As most of America's school systems moved toward resegregation in the late 1970's and 1980's, characterized by white flight and a fervent backlash against busing, the Prince Edward public schools became more integrated. The hostilities accompanying this transition came into sharp focus in 1979, when Griffin's youngest son, Eric, complained in a speech to the student body that whites controlled all dimensions of American society and stood on the verge of taking over Prince Edward County High School as well. Griffin's denouncement of whites' election as homecoming queen, yearbook editor, and valedictorian offended many white students, who walked out of the

[851] Ibid.

auditorium to jeers of "get out, get out, we don't want you," from some of their black classmates. The respected black captain of the football team, Vader Colbert, immediately seized the microphone to deliver an extemporaneous speech advocating interracial respect and cooperation, and Griffin ultimately lost the election. Although he later apologized for his remarks, tension lingered. Some whites refused to ride the school buses for the remainder of the year and others threatened to transfer to the Academy.[852]

Across the board, 1979 represented a year of change. L. Francis Griffin himself noted in discouragement that:

> There's a new status quo here. There is no voluntary movement toward greater equality...This is still a battleground, the lines of separation still exist – but the pressures are not such that there will be skirmishes or all-out fighting. It's a cold war now, and I look for it to go on.

Nevertheless the community coalition supporting the public schools scored a victory later that year when its referendum proposing that future School Board appointments be made by the Board of Supervisors rather than the School Trustee Electoral Board passed with a wide majority of support. Public school advocates stepped up their campaign for change the previous summer, when the Circuit Court appointed two more Academy partisans to the Electoral Board. Many considered the now-interracial Board of Supervisors, despite its history of obstructionism, a more sympathetic body than the School Trustee Electoral Board. Unlike the trustees, Supervisors stood for popular election, and consequently exhibited greater receptivity to the concerns of their constituents, a growing majority of whom by 1979 possessed a stake in the welfare of the public schools.[853]

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[852] Wolters, p. 124.

[853] John Egerton, "A Gentlemen's Fight," *American Heritage*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (August/September 1979): 56-65; Wolters, p. 125; Tyler Whitley, "Black Writing New

While African American candidates began to win election to the Board of Supervisors earlier in the decade, the defeat of the Academy-affiliated Chairman and election of James Ghee and two other blacks in November 1979 denoted a turning point. Ghee, an AFSC placement student who attended law school at the University of Virginia and returned to Farmville to become the town's first black lawyer, consistently exhibited strong and outspoken support for the public schools. Author of the appointment referendum, he defeated a white opponent to become the first African American elected from the majority-white Farmville district. Both an optimist and a realist about the changes in the county, Ghee commented shortly after his election that, "I think Prince Edward is in the midst of change, but I don't know where on the vicious circle they would be now. If you look at the directors of the local banks, you see the same folks who were there in the fifties. Most likely they are still controlling."[854]

Two months after the election, L.F. Griffin passed away at the age of sixty-three. His death marked the end of an epoch. For forty years, as a minister, NAACP leader, community activist, litigant, advisor, poverty program director, and counselor, Leslie Francis Griffin stood at the helm of the struggle for civil rights in Prince Edward. Sacrificing his own youthful dreams of leaving the county, he devoted his life to inspiring his neighbors to challenge Jim Crow, demand equal opportunity, and defy the strictures of white supremacy. His oldest son, Leslie, Jr., reflected in 2004 that his father often wondered why he remained in Farmville, "but he believed it was a thing he was called by

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Phase in Prince Edward 'Racist' History," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 November 1979.

[854] Tyler Whitley, "Black Writing New Phase in Prince Edward 'Racist' History," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 November 1979; Wolters, p. 123.

God to do...It was a time that black people were ready to have conditions changed...and my father was born for such a time as that." Those who knew him best considered him fearless, a "spiritual, moral, and civil rights giant."[855]

A proponent of what he called "disrupting religion," Rev. Griffin brought the social gospel to Southside Virginia, challenging blacks and whites alike to engage the world and grapple with ideas and practices foreign to the indigenous worldview of the rural South. On Easter Sunday 1966, instead of preaching the traditional sermon about the empty tomb, he prompted his congregation to question the concept of "that old time religion," and cast off the image of God as a "universal bellhop" who makes a way for the faithful instead of providing His followers the vision and judgment to make a way of their own. "We want a God not whose way we are going, but who's going our way," he argued. "We don't feel identified with anyone but ourselves. We open the doors on Sunday with no provisions for Monday." Griffin's conviction that religion and politics should not be kept separate made a deep impression upon the young people who led the county's direct action campaigns. John Stokes called him a man who "taught us concepts and virtues that we utilized each and every day of our lives." Rev. J. Samuel Williams remembered Griffin as "a fiery exponent of the gospel" who introduced his listeners to a new image of Jesus: not the meek, blond-haired, blue-eyed saint of so much religious iconography, but a social revolutionary with a radical passion for justice.[856]

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[855] Ken Woodley, "Rev. Griffin Is Honored," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[856] O. Jerome Jackson, "L.F. Griffin Urges Disrupting Religion," *The VOICE*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (May 1966), School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Transcript, Vera Allen interview, 21 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Ken

Frequently interspersing his strategic advice with allusions to Henry David Thoreau and liberal theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Griffin maintained dual identities as an activist and an intellectual. Though usually characterized as an integrationist, he embraced some of the concepts foundational to black power, namely economic independence and community control over majority black schools. When two of his children, Leslie, Jr., and Naja, joined black power circles in Massachusetts, they frequently called home to discuss strategy with their father. When Griffin resigned as Executive Director of the Prince Edward Community Action Group in 1970, he criticized the War on Poverty for abandoning its original aims and reverting to the bureaucratic model of placing decision-making authority in the hands of agencies and officials whose rigid policies entrap rather than empower the poor. "I can't be part of a terrible hoax that is being played on black people and poor people," he remarked. "I think we must come up with black answers for black problems."[857]

Even throughout his busiest days as President of the Virginia State Conference NAACP, teenagers flocked to his office for advice on everything from organizing picket lines to planning strikes to handling personal problems. Whites and blacks alike credited him with preserving peace during the years of greatest tension, particularly through his efforts to channel youth anger into protest and activism rather than retaliatory violence. The "Martin Luther King, Jr. of Farmville," his life so profoundly affected many of his

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Woodley, "Rev. Griffin Is Honored," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[857] Jean White, "The Griffins of Farmville and Harvard: A Single Goal," *Washington Post*, 21 April 1969; J.Y. Smith, "Poverty Head Quits in Prince Edward County," *Washington Post*, 14 July 1970.

young associates that years after his death, many still approached decisions wondering how Griffin would handle them. His death ushered in a new cohort of leaders, members of the "crippled generation" determined to make Prince Edward County a place where such a tragedy could never happen again.[858]

In 1983, Carl Eggleston, an African American funeral director and member of the new generation, sued the town of Farmville over the at-large electoral system used to elect Town Council members. After expending $110,000 in legal fees, town officials conceded, establishing a ward system. Eggleston immediately ran for a seat from a majority African American ward, and won election as the council's first black member. By the late 1980's, the council included two African Americans, former Negro County Agent and Free School organizer Rudolf Doswell and Chuck Reid, barred from school in 1959 at the age of seven. Reid, who attributed his desire to serve the community to Griffin's mentoring, commented in 1992 that despite the changes in Farmville, deeply rooted remnants of the 1960's power structure continued to flourish. Sitting at council meetings with former obstructionists and their children, he often felt a palpable sense of distance between himself and the "old guard," noting, "It just pops into your mind...You just think about these same people that locked you out of schools sitting here cracking jokes and doing whatever they're doing. And now they're running the town." Little anonymity exists in a small town, where actions are personified and the past is not easily avoided.[859]

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[858] Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Armstead "Chuck" Reid interview, 19 August 1992, ibid.

An Academy for a New Generation

The white return to the public schools corresponded to the onset of difficult times for the Academy. Throughout the 1970's, the school openly championed its heritage of defiance, going so far as to choose the phrase, "First to leave the old ways, The first to dare to try, Fought for with such assurance, How could they think she'd die?" as its Alma Mater. Though enrollment dropped 20% between 1959 and 1973, with a student body of 1200, Prince Edward Academy remained one of the South's largest "seg schools" (segregation academies). Though tuition costs lay below those of most other member institutions of the National Association of Independent Schools, a decrease in available financial aid placed the school out of reach for an ever-growing number of white parents. By 1973, only 30% of Academy patrons received financial assistance. The school maintained a high quality of education, despite the fact that nearly fifteen years into operation, the Lower School remained unaccredited by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges."[860]

Pronounced tensions festered in the white community between Academy patrons and the public school group. Academy whites, the vast majority of whom hailed from Farmville's professional and commercial class, maintained an exclusive social circle, while the public school crowd forged political ties with blacks and created a community of its own. Griffin observed in 1979 that the intensity of the hostility between white

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[859] Transcript, Armstead "Chuck" Reid interview, 19 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27; Foster and Foster, p. 29.

[860] Kitty Terjen, "Cradle of Resistance: Prince Edward County Today," *New South*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1973): 18-27.

liberals and Academy adherents outweighed that existing between blacks and whites. Twenty years later, legal historian Jennifer Spreng noted that, "Parents' decisions to send their children to one school or another became much broader permanent social choices." As the two groups distanced themselves from each other, further intensifying the historic town-gown split, they pulled their children with them. Longwood laboratory school friendships splintered when students entered different high schools.[861]

Teacher Midge McClellan maintained that Prince Edward Academy's history did not stand upon the rock of racial exclusion. "It was a fight against the federal government forcing something on Southside Virginia," she insisted. "I don't know if it's particularly Southern, but I do know it's unique in America – these people cannot be bought with free milk and food stamps." Regardless of this opinion, the exclusively white school continued to police the borders of racial segregation with the zealotry of a true believer. Once, on a rare venture outside the Virginia Academy Athletic Conference, the junior varsity football team traveled an hour and a half to Richmond to take on an Episcopal boys' school, only to turn around immediately upon the realization that the other team included a black player. When the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced that private schools must adopt, administer, and advertise racially non-discriminatory admissions policies in order to retain tax-exempt status, the Academy refused to comply, losing its exemption in 1978. Foundation attorney George Leonard immediately challenged the IRS policy, citing a violation of the First Amendment. "We're

[861] Wolters, p. 125; Jennifer E. Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside: A Desegregation Drama in Five Acts," 19 U. Ark. Little Rock L.J. 327 (Spring 1997).

discriminatory as hell," he asserted. "We're goddamned if we're going to tell everyone that we were hypocrites all these years," by revising the admissions policy.[862]

Unsurprisingly, his challenge failed. Costs skyrocketed and enrollment declined. The vast majority of white newcomers to the county chose the public schools for their children, while Academy enrollment shrank primarily to the grandchildren of the families who laid the school's foundations in the 1950's. By the 1982-83 academic year, tuition topped $1300. In a county with a median annual income of $6000, administrators saw the writing on the wall. Defiant rhetoric aside, by 1984, the Foundation board agreed that the only path back to financial stability lay in regaining tax exempt status, even at the price of desegregation. In the fall of 1986, the school that once boasted a student body of 1446 whites began classes with an enrollment of six hundred and sixty-five, including five African Americans. Yet only one of the new students resided in Prince Edward; most local blacks scoffed at the school's grudging acceptance of token integration. When Academy officials invited black leaders to come for a tour in hopes of inspiring them to encourage minority students to apply, many considered the invitation a joke. Disregarding both the minority recruitment initiative and the addition of a black member to the Foundation board (a Prince Edward native who spent most of his adult life in New York, where he sent his children to private schools) as cynical maneuvers aimed only at securing federal funds, the majority of black residents publicly disparaging the idea of becoming "pawns" in the Academy's financial chess game.[863]

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[862] Kitty Terjen, "Cradle of Resistance: Prince Edward County Today," *New South*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 1973): 18-27; Jennifer E. Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside: A Desegregation Drama in Five Acts," 19 U. Ark. Little Rock L.J. 327 (Spring 1997).

[863] Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside"; Jean Fairfax to "Our Gang," 24 January 2004, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Transcript, Vonita White Dandridge [Foster] interview, 29

Black enrollment increased slightly in the early 1990's, but the gains derived almost exclusively from out-of-county residents or migrants new to the area. A few black parents indicated a willingness to allow their children to attend, should they express a desire to do so; one commenting that an Academy education would provide his son experience in getting along with whites. But many refused to even consider the possibility. Some envisioned their children suffering harassment from hostile whites and feared that that interaction in such a bastion of segregationism would lead to racial violence. Others simply pointed out that fiscal concerns, not a sincere change of heart, propelled the interest in minority students, that Academy administrators never distanced themselves from or apologized for the school's massive resistance history, and that token integration constituted a case of "far too little, far too late."[864]

James White vowed that his children would never set darken the Academy's door, commenting that, "As long as that place is there, as far as I'm concerned, it's a bitter part of history to me. It hurt too many people. And it's still standing. Still standing strong." Some middle-aged blacks attempted to adopt a more optimistic view, hypothesizing that the majority of white Academy students no longer considered their school a symbol of racial exclusion. For many older whites, however, the identity of the public schools as black and the Academy as white remained firmly fixed. One former member of both the

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September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, James White interview, 19 August 1992, ibid.

[864] Transcript, James White interview, 19 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Armstead "Chuck" Reid interview, 19 August 1992, ibid.

Foundation board and the Prince Edward County School Board continued to refer to the Academy as "ours" and the public schools as "theirs" well into the 1990's.[865]

In the early 1990's, Atlanta philanthropist J.B. Fuqua, a leading figure in the rural education movement, which focused on providing technologically advanced, experimental private school programs in rural communities, breathed new life into the institution with a donation of ten million dollars. A Prince Edward native, Fuqua earmarked funds to substantially increase minority recruitment and scholarship programs, publicly expressing a desire to help the school shed its racist image. Consistent with the theme of a new beginning, officials retired the memory-loaded name Prince Edward Academy in 1993, adopting the neutral designation Fuqua School instead. By the end of the decade, the new scholarships doubled minority enrollment to twenty-six blacks and fourteen Asians, but new President Ruth Murphy, a former assistant superintendent in the Durham, North Carolina public schools, saw room for continued improvement. The changes did not reverse the continuing decline in in-county enrollment – by the turn of the 21st century, only 10% of Prince Edward County students opted for private education – but increasing numbers of transfers from twelve surrounding counties did stabilize enrollment at approximately five hundred.[866]

The Success Story of the *Brown* Cases?

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[865] Transcript, James White interview, 19 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Verdella and Leslie Hamilton interview, 4 October 1992, ibid.

[866] Spreng, "Scenes from the Southside"; Timothy Phelps, "A Model for the Nation." *Newsday: The Long Island Newspaper*, 17 May 1994; Farmville Area Chamber of Commerce, "A Community Profile," (Elgin, IL: Village Profile.com, 2006); "It's Past Time For Closure; It's Time to Begin to Heal," *The Record of Hampden-Sydney College*, Winter 2000: 2-8.

In May 1994, the Long Island newspaper *Newsday* commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the *Brown* decision by sending reporter Timothy Phelps to the communities that birthed the original five school segregation cases. From Summerton, South Carolina to Topeka, Kansas, Phelps found white flight, resegregation, failing school systems, racial hostility, and repudiation of the integrationist ideal. Only in Farmville, however, did he find hope, writing optimistically that, "Prince Edward County is the success story of the five cases...The same community that treated its black children like so much trash is now a model for the nation." Deeply impressed by the public schools' academic quality and racial balance (60% black, 40% white – newsworthy in a decade in which segregation in southern public schools increased for the first time since 1954 and segregation of African American students across the nation increased visibly), Phelps lauded the county for laying the resentments and inequalities of the past to rest.[867]

Most Prince Edward blacks, however, did not see the community in such a sanguine manner. While acknowledging the strides made over the past forty years, they insisted that further changes remained necessary. Gary Smith, who returned to the county after many years in the North, observed that:

> There are still some pretty hard core people who have a lot of the values of thirty years ago. But I think on the whole, the community is moving forward...It's not the Prince Edward of thirty years ago, that's for sure.

Professor Edna Allen-Bledsoe noted that, "I teach at Longwood – so of course some things are better – but there are still gaps that could be breached. We still need to learn to

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[867] Timothy Phelps, "A Model for the Nation," *Newsday: The Long Island Newspaper*, 17 May 1994. For more on resegregation trends, see Gary Orfield, Susan E. Eaton and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York City: New Press, 1996).

talk to each other." Edward Morton commented that appearances had improved, but "down in the bottom, you still stay on your side and I stay on my side." J.T. Jackson, Jr., who left the county after graduating from high school, observed that true integration and true equality still constituted works-in-progress. "We're still pretty much in the same position we were twenty, thirty, forty years ago," he reflected:

> Thirty years ago, you wouldn't have had a Colin Powell, but you can have that now, so some people are taking advantage of that. But generally, speaking as a group, I don't know that we've made a lot of advances in the last twenty, thirty years.[868]

John Hurt, who remained in the area, possessed no complaints about the treatment accorded his children in the public schools and held confidence that life would prove better for their generation than for his own. Nonetheless, he remained unconvinced by the claims of total transformation, pointing out that black men still did not serve as foremen over white workers in 1990's Farmville. Charles Herndon described the constant expansion of Longwood College as a lingering problem, commenting that the direction of expansion primarily displaced black neighborhoods and frequently offered below market prices for affected properties. Even along Griffin Boulevard, renamed in the 1980's to honor Farmville civil rights icon, Longwood construction projects displaced black residents to create more space for a still predominately white student body. Vonita

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[868] Mary Beth Joachim, "Remembering *Brown*: Healing and Learning," *Farmville Herald*, 20 May 1994, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Gary Smith interview, 24 September 1992, ibid; Transcript, J.T. Jackson, Jr. interview, 11 November 1992, ibid; James White interview, 19 August 1992, ibid.

White Foster observed that most Farmville residents desired to see improvement in local conditions over the last thirty years, but "I think it's not the case. I think we have a camouflage here." Retired educator Vera Allen applauded the school system and acknowledged a subtle improvement in race relations, but demurred to proclaim equality just around the corner.[869]

An elderly white couple interviewed in the early 1990's characterized their own attitudes on race as "just the way the schools are going. We're not segregationists, we're not exactly integrationists, we just accept what is...and do the best we can with it." Gently paternalistic, they spoke of their "love" for black friends and the give and take relationship they practiced with certain neighbors. The Farmville revealed in the couple's stories was one of negotiated, careful change. For years, they maintained a relationship with an African American man clearly uneasy with the thought of entering white domestic space. Even when invited into their home, he preferred to converse in the yard. Eventually, he agreed to sit on the porch, but several more years elapsed before he finally accepted an invitation into the living room. Old patterns of behavior altered slowly, particularly amongst members of the older generation, who stepped gingerly around still visible lines.[870]

Though critical of hard-core segregationists, wondering why they, as members of the same culture and generation, could change their attitudes but the hard-liners could

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[869] Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid; Foster and Foster, p. 34-35; Transcript, Vonita White Dandridge [Foster] interview, 29 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Vera Allen interview, 21 August 1992, ibid.

[870] Transcript, Verdella and Leslie Hamilton interview, 4 October 1992, ibid.

not, the couple admitted to still drawing some boundaries of their own. Verdella Hamilton found the issue inordinately complex. Though pleased that color distinctions seemed to be lessening among children schooled together from kindergarten onward, she nonetheless worried that this new closeness would eventually lead to intermarriage. "I don't know why it bothers me," she admitted. "But it does...Robins mate with robins, cardinals mate with cardinals. The animals, a lot of them, just mate with their own kind. So why shouldn't people do the same?"[871]

Though most African Americans expressed general satisfaction with the quality of education offered in the public schools, by the late 1980's a significant number worried that ability grouping and tracking policies segregated students in the classroom. Pointing to the high numbers of white students clustered in honors classes and the overrepresentation of blacks in the special education and vocational education programs, the Prince Edward County NAACP pressured the School Board to launch a review of class assignment policies. Agreeing (in and of itself a remarkable indication of improved conditions), the Board appointed three citizen/staff committees to review available research on tracking and grouping, conduct a comparative study of practices in neighboring districts, and survey Prince Edward teachers and administrators' opinions on the current policy. After the submission of the committees' reports, Board members adopted a vague policy statement that sought to distinguish between permanent tracking and flexible grouping based on student characteristics. Repudiating the first, but recognizing that the majority of teachers and administrators favored the second, the

[871] Ibid.

district struggled to balance the importance of keeping students together with the goal of improving each student's academic performance.[872]

Ten years later, the quandary continued. Over 70% of Prince Edward County High (PECH) students enthusiastically participated in school life through extracurricular activities and 58% of seniors earned dual enrollment (high school honors/community college) credit or took courses offered at Longwood and Hampden-Sydney. Yet, despite the fact that the public schools have often been lauded as among the best in the state, in 1999, PECH students still scored below the state average on the SATs and teachers worried over a continuing pattern of white students outperforming blacks. Even in 2005, pupils in all three of the district's schools scored below the state average in nearly every area tested by Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) exams. Only in advanced math and world history did Prince Edward students' scores exceed those of the rest of the state. Pupils' scores did match, however, those of their peers in surrounding Southside counties such as Appomattox, Cumberland, Buckingham, Lunenburg, and Nottoway.[873]

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[872] Foster and Foster, p. 15-23, 4-36; Transcript, Reginald White interview, 10 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Vera Allen interview, 21 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid; Wilbur B. Brookover, "Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1953-1993," *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (1993): 149-161.

[873] Fact Sheet, Prince Edward County High School, 16 January 2004, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Farmville Area Chamber of Commerce, "A Community Profile," (Elgin, IL: Village Profile.com, 2006); Standards of Learning Summary Report, Spring Pass Rate Table, 2003-2005, Virginia Department of Education, available at Hhttp://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/src/index.shtmlH.

The district met No Child Left Behind requirements for 2004, 2005, and 2006, and the graduation rate, at 79% in 2005, matched the state average.[874] White students, however, continued to outperform blacks in all of the major academic subject areas. In 2005-2006, 76% of county students passed English performance tests, but while 89% of whites scored adequately, only 68% of blacks did. 77% of white students met mathematics requirements, but only 52% of blacks did the same. Encouragingly, the gap narrowed significantly at the high school level, where 94% of white students and 89% of blacks passed the English portion of the SOLs and 91% of whites and 84% of blacks the mathematics portion. White scores in science (a 92% pass rate as opposed to 68% for black students) and history (92% to 69%), however, remained skewed.[875]

When legal historian Peter Irons visited the county to conduct interviews for his 2002 book, *Jim Crow's Children: The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision*, black students complained that teachers predominantly selected white students for honors classes and called on white students more than their black classmates. While terming integration a good thing and agreeing that little overt racial tension existed in the county schools, many commented that their parents accepted integrated education, but not interracial dating or significant socializing outside of school. A teacher's aide made a similar point. While applauding the students for making a genuine effort to integrate, he

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[874] The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the culmination of the standards-based education reform movement, uses standardized testing to measure states' and school districts' progress toward the goal of providing a quality education to each pupil. Highly controversial for its emphasis upon standardized tests and school choice, critics have labeled the law an attempt to privatize American education through condemning public schools and facilitating students' transition to private institutions.

[875] Prince Edward County School Division Report Card, 2003-2006, Virginia Department of Education, available at Hhttp://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/src/index.shtmlH.

observed that he recently witnessed a white man explode in the hallway of the high school when he saw his daughter walking with her African American boyfriend.[876]

The progress in Prince Edward County has not come easily, nor is it complete. The victories won have been hard fought, secured by members of the new generation's commitment to providing their children a better community than the one bequeathed to them. Yet the public school's current problems - financing, ability grouping, social segregation, controversies over community control and curriculum/faculty reflection of the ethnic makeup of the student body, problematic performance on standardized tests, the achievement gap between white and minority students, and attempts to strike a balance of coexistence between public and private education – are the seminal issues in American education regardless of geographical region. Prince Edward has rejoined the American mainstream. The county's schools, while perhaps not a model for the nation, have overcome enormous obstacles to take their place as a fairly typical American public school system. In certain areas, most notably racial integration, they stand ahead of the curve.

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[876] Irons, p. 328-330; Transcript, Armstead "Chuck" Reid interview, 19 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS.

CONCLUSION

VICTORS OR VICTIMS?

By the early 1990's, many members of the "crippled generation" worried that the Prince Edward school closings had become merely a footnote in southern history, an easily forgettable incident deemed to have no lasting significance beyond its ubiquitous effects within the community. Across the county, parents found themselves unable to help their children with fourth grade math, check their homework, or teach them to love school. Illiterate adults struggled to write checks and shopped for groceries by recalling pictures on cans. Minimum wage workers scraped by without a high school diploma and worried that their children would follow in their footsteps. Vera Allen noted a pervasive inability to trust among many of the closings generation, a deep-rooted sense of insecurity, and an ever-present fear of being taken advantage of, a fear that spurred withdrawal from, rather than engagement with, the world. John Hurt, who learned to read at middle-age in a night school class, saw evidence of devastation all around him. "I know a lot of peoples [sic] that I raised up with, they can't read, they can't write their name, and stuff like that," he reflected. "But because of their age, they ashamed to admit they need help."[877]

Yet even in Farmville, many young people remained unaware of both the facts and the ramifications of their parents' struggle. A few parents did tell their own children about their experiences, and Farmville Town Council member Chuck Reid visited the

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[877] Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Gary Smith interview, 24 September 1992, ibid; Transcript, Vera Allen interview, 21 August 1992, ibid.

high school to address a student assembly on the subject of the closings. But many worried that the average Farmville teenager possessed an ignorance of the county's unique history that rivaled any other American's. J.T. Jackson, Jr. lamented the depth of the silence:

> We're talking about a county in a state in America where public schools were closed for five years. That ranks right up there with World War II, as far as I'm concerned. But I can go to Prince Edward County High School, the school I graduated from, right now, and I can go into a classroom and ask a bunch of kids what do they know about it. They have no idea what the hell I'm talking about.

Ascribing partial responsibility to African Americans' hesitation to remember, he pointed to the worldwide Jewish community's approach to the Holocaust as a model. In Jackson's eyes, adherents of the Jewish faith used reflection, commemoration, and discussion as avenues to arrive at a shared understanding of the meaning of the Holocaust in their experience as a people. But Prince Edward residents, white and black alike, in his opinion, remained ignorant of the meaning of their own experience, on both a personal and a community level. Others feared that publicly revisiting the subject might spark violence. Edward Morton noted that, "Prince Edward might explode one day...People might lose their tempers, they might remember."[878]

John Hurt observed that few people, black or white, exhibited a willingness to discuss the past. "I wouldn't say the wound has been healed," he commented. "But it's been dressed well enough that nobody wants to take the bandage off it." Gary Smith also fell back upon the language of physical suffering, terming the experience a "trauma that people are in different levels of healing from." With perspective gained from several

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[878] Transcript, James White interview, 19 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Armstead "Chuck" Reid interview, 19 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, J.T. Jackson, Jr. interview, 11 November 1992, ibid; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, ibid.

years outside the region, Smith labeled the county's policy of polite silence a particularly Southern response to viciousness. As he explained:

> It's a skeleton in the closet that nobody really wants to open up. I think that the Southern thing is be nice about it and just kind of put it in the closet and let it stay there buried. And I think people try to do it. Sometimes it forces its way back up because some people haven't changed their attitude that much, or you run across someone who is suffering today directly because of what happened then, and it forces its way out of the closet.[879]

In reality, however, the reaction perhaps characterized Virginia codes more than Southern ones, consistent with the state's tradition of civility, gentility, and concern for avoiding public displays of racial ugliness. Aware that public discussion of the past could stir old animosities, challenge the rhetoric of progress, expose the county to negative publicity, and force a confrontation with painful memories, many residents retreated behind a wall of silence. Whites shrank away from "opening old wounds" without realization that the vast majority of the wounds inflicted by the school closings never closed in the first place. Yet one African American woman pointed out that white residents possessed wounds of their own, ones she considered more difficult to heal than blacks', for only a long-overdue admission of wrongdoing could staunch the bleeding. Observers noted that many Prince Edward blacks seemed almost ashamed of their experience, embarrassed by the educational and social scars they carried, and perhaps of their own powerlessness to force a reopening of the schools.[880] Surprisingly few viewed

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[879] Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Gary Smith interview, 24 September 1992, ibid.

[880] For the similarity of this response to that of Japanese-Americans interned during World War II, see Rober Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 97, and Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 484-488.

themselves as participants in a national struggle to secure equal educational opportunities for all children. Gary Smith noted that, "in this area, it's a pretty closed community and so [people] don't really look at the broader scope out there...I mean, what's close to home in that small community is the pain, is the anger, is the frustration, and dealing with that."[881]

When the fortieth anniversary of *Brown* rolled around in May 1994, members of the Prince Edward County NAACP seized the opportunity to ignite the process of remembering and boost local pride in the community's historic role in the national civil rights movement. As 1951 strike leader Edwilda Isaac told the *Farmville Herald* – by the 1990's no longer a mouthpiece for political conservatism – "I think if we had never stood up, we'd still be down in Moton, trying to make ends meet." Chapter officials organized a reunion weekend for R.R. Moton alumni and faculty, filled with social activities, commemorative ceremonies, tours of the old Moton High School and current Prince Edward County High School, an address by original *Davis* case lawyer Oliver Hill, and a community worship service at First Baptist. Though framing the weekend primarily as "an opportunity for former students and their families, former faculty and staff, and friends to remember, reflect on the past, rejuvenate and rededicate," organizers opened the various component events to members of the general public as well, inviting other county residents to "participate in and support this commemoration of our shared history." Chapter president James Ghee exhorted attendees to stand tall in the memory that "the continuing existence of public education in Virginia and, perhaps, the South and

[881] Transcript, Vera Allen interview, 21 August 1992, ibid.; Transcript, Gary Smith interview, 24 September 1992, ibid.

the nation, was won by black school children and their families in Prince Edward County in the 1950's and 1960's."[882]

Some white residents, however, ducked their heads and prayed for a quick end to the spotlight. Reporter Jamie Ruff, who covered the anniversary commemorations for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, noted that "many whites just wanted all the attention to go away. Many blacks nursed an anguish that – for all the articles, discussions and documentaries – they felt was not completely understood." Board of Supervisors chairman Hugh E. Carwile, Jr. chafed at the attention. "I wish they would put it under the rug," he commented. "If you have a thorn and keep rubbing it, it never heals." Ghee disagreed vehemently, arguing that "until we are able to talk across race lines about race, we are going to continue to have this thing fester."[883]

Aware that fostering conversation across racial lines would be more easily said than done, Ghee nevertheless insisted that a local civil rights museum project could provide community members an opportunity to collaborate on the common cause of collecting and interpreting the county's unique history. Upon learning that the Prince Edward County School Board planned to build a new wing on the middle school and move the fifth-graders housed at Farmville Elementary (the former R.R. Moton High School) to the educational complex south of town, Ghee and other like-minded residents set their sites on the old school building. What better place to commemorate the struggle

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[882] Informational Packet, "Prince Edward County Branch NAACP *Brown v. Board of Education* Fortieth Anniversary Commemoration Celebration," 27-29 May 1994, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Mary Beth Joachim, "Remembering *Brown*: Healing and Learning," *Farmville Herald*, 20 May 1994, clipping, ibid.

[883] Jamie Ruff, "Course Explores Still-Painful Prince Edward Schools Struggle," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, n.d., clipping, ibid; Jamie Ruff and Kathryn Orth, "Social Fabric Ripped Apart," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 May 1994, clipping, ibid.

over the schools, they queried, than the building that birthed the conflict? What better way to remember the courageousness of the strikers, the anguish of the closings, and the inequalities of Jim Crow education than to preserve the structure that so embodied the county's experience?[884]

Forming the Branch-Moton Historical Society, they secured a $30,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation to conduct a study on the feasibility of converting the building into a museum. In November 1993, Ghee and Vera Allen, president of the Martha E. Forrester Council of Women,[885] comprised primarily of Moton graduates, persuaded the Board of Supervisors to act as fiscal agent for administration of the funds. Completed in 1995, the survey, which highlighted potential strategies for adaptive reuse, provided an alternative to the Supervisors' preferred plan of selling the building to recoup the costs of the middle school expansion project.[886]

Concerned that landmark status would impede, or at the very least, complicate its efforts to sell the school to the highest bidder, the Board of Supervisors opposed the campaign to secure Moton a place on the Virginia Landmarks Register, the state's official list of properties significant for their place in Virginia history. Only days before the

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[884] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

[885] Educator Martha E. Forrester founded the Council of Women in 1920 to advocate for the improvement of black education in county. The Council played an instrumental role in the erection of the original R.R. Moton High School building in 1939. See Freeman, "Farmville: A Burden of History."

[886] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27; National Park Service Northeast Region, "Development Plan: The Robert Russa Moton Museum – A Center for the Study of Civil Rights in Education," 24 February 2000, NPS Northeast Regional Office, Philadelphia, PA.

Department of Historic Resources' expected announcement of landmark status, county officials submitted letters of opposition, forcing a deferment of the decision. Hugh Carwile argued that "the county may be better served if the building is removed. We don't want this to become a race problem. People tell me it's a constant reminder, like rubbing salt in a wound." Some blacks, including Supervisor Elsie Carrington, James Ghee's successor as president of the Prince Edward County NAACP, agreed that a museum did not constitute the best use of the property. While some undoubtedly wished to erase from the landscape such a touchstone for controversy and painful memories, others simply argued that funds from the sale could be channeled back into the public school system, creating a living memorial to the past.[887]

Museum supporters, however, overpowered the resistance. *Farmville Herald* editor J. Kendrick Woodley III, a young Hampden-Sydney alumnus whose Richmond childhood included black friends and busing to a 90% African American school, lambasted the officials' actions in a scorching editorial. "If we are going to tear down the former R.R. Moton High School...let's go ahead and tear down Independence Hall, too, and dump the Liberty Bell in the river," he fumed. Woodley saw profound national significance in the events kindled in the building. "The Farmville school building is no less a monument to human courage in the belief that all human beings are created equal than Independence Hall...[It] must not be destroyed." Not a single person wrote the *Herald* to complain about Woodley's equation of Independence Hall and Moton High

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[887] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27; Mary Beth Joachim, "Citizens Show Support for Moton School," *Farmville Herald*, March 1995, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

School, and many residents – black and white alike – sent letters expressing their enthusiasm for the project.

Some whites embraced the campaign and others disapproved, but for the most part, critics kept their opposition to themselves. Hampden-Sydney College president Samuel V. Wilson attributed a significant amount of white hesitation not to racism, but rather to guilt. According to Wilson, some whites who remained silent throughout the crisis now regretted their acquiescence, and some adult children guiltily abhored their parents' actions but hesitated to join any ventures that might subject their elders to public criticism. While acknowledging that a percentage of the population did still support the course of action adopted in 1959, he suggested that many others simply found themselves too conflicted and embarrassed to take a position on the issue.[888]

James Ghee organized a community meeting at First Baptist, at which two hundred supporters vowed to continue the fight. Retired public school administrator Thomas Mayfield suggested a county referendum on selling the building, commenting that, "I don't think the few members of the Supervisors should dictate what should be done with that building. It belongs to the community." Though primarily a strategy session, some attendees did speak to the underlying issues surrounding the debate. An elderly mother of four forced to send her children away during the closings insisted that "we need to take that school, they owe that to us." Another deeply resented the Board's high-handed interference. "This is the same mess that was going on in the 1950's," she complained. "I'm tired of this." A Moton graduate contended that Prince Edward blacks needed the presence of the building to remind them to take pride in themselves. "Even

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[888] R.C. Smith, "Prince Edward County: Revisited and Revitalized," *The Virginia Quarterly Review,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Winter 1997):1-27.

now, when I pass by that school, I get a good feeling, just knowing what happened there," he commented. "One of the most important things we can do as a black community is to work to keep it."[889]

After collecting $1000 toward the preservation effort, the group adjourned until the Supervisors' next meeting. When March 14 arrived, a capacity crowd of project supporters packed the meeting room and the Board adopted a policy of damage control and conciliation. When the School Board retired the building from service in June, the county agreed to negotiate a purchase price with preservationist groups. By early 1996, the Martha E. Forrester Council of Women committed to buy the building for $300,000, a pledge soon followed by the school's placement on the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation: the National Register of Historic Places.[890] Despite willingness to sell to the Forrester Council, county officials again opposed formalization of the building's historic status, fearful that if the group's fundraising effort were to fail, a Register nomination would discourage other potential buyers.[891]

Despite the Supervisors' plea for deferment, however, the State Review Board voted to send the nomination to the National Register, which accepted it for inclusion on

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[889] Mary Beth Joachim, "Citizens Show Support for Moton School," *Farmville Herald*, March 1995, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[890] Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register includes districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Administered by the National Park Service, the Register contains over 80,000 properties and offers resources and support for the identification and protection of historic resources. For more information, see Hhttp://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/about.htmH.

[891] Mary Beth Joachim, "Citizens Show Support for Moton School," *Farmville Herald*, March 1995, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Allen Freeman, "Farmville: A Burden of History," *Historic Preservation*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January/February 1996): 62-67.

October 24, 1995.[892] Two years later, Robert G. Stanton, the first African American to direct the National Park Service, came to Farmville to personally bestow National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation upon R.R. Moton High School.[893] In a ceremony unimaginable in 1951, both the mayor of Farmville and the chairman of the Board of Supervisors welcomed a highly placed African American federal official come to praise the courage of a group of black teenagers. Strike veteran James Samuel Williams, now pastor of Levi Baptist Church, and Vera Allen, fired for her daughters' role in the walkout, shared the stage with U.S. Congressman Virgil Goode, Jr. and Patrick McMahon, President and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation.[894]

The NHL nomination form labeled the school "an example of how local protest linked with a national movement that ultimately changed not only the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, but also the perspective with which the people of the United States regarded the Fourteenth Amendment." The "Historical Significance" segment of the form included a detailed, conceptually sophisticated summation of the decision to close the schools, the relationship between the county's course of action and the state's program of massive resistance, and the consequences of the closings. Nevertheless, the National Historic Landmark plaque mounted on the front of the building commemorated

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[892] Freeman, "Farmville: A Burden of History," ibid.

[893] The National Historic Landmark designation is the highest such recognition accorded historic properties determined to be of exceptional value in representing or illustrating an important theme, event, or person in the history of the nation. Fewer than 2500 of the properties comprising the National Register bear the distinction of National Historic Landmark status. For more information, see Hhttp://www.cr.nps.gov/landmarks.htmH.

[894] Program, "Ceremonies Conferring National Historic Landmark Designation on the Robert Russa Moton High School," 31 August 1998, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

only the April 1951 strike and the subsequent 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.[895]

The building's close connection with the litigation campaign that produced *Brown* is indisputably central to its significance. However, the decision to devote the entirety of the plaque's limited space to the 1951-1954 period compresses a highly complex, shocking, and emotionally wrenching story into a narrative of courageous challenge and quick victory that is more easily palatable, but perhaps not as relevant to a still-fragmented society. Though an informational wayside erected at the rear of the building by the Virginia Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail[896] provides a more expansive interpretation of Moton's significance, the NHL plaque remains the most official encapsulation of the story.

The Hampden-Sydney Symposium: How Deep Does the Healing Go?

As 1999 approached, bringing with it the fortieth anniversary of the decision to close the schools, Roxann Prazniak of the Hampden-Sydney College History Department proposed that the college sponsor a symposium on the school closings. Though aware that such an event could be construed as "opening old wounds" and would carry the risk of stimulating hurt feelings or heated exchanges, administrators agreed such a program

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[895] National Historic Landmarks Nomination Form, 1998, Robert Russa Moton High School File, Section 8/Dedesignated Landmarks Section, National Historic Landmarks Program Files, NPS Northeast Regional Office, Philadelphia, PA.

[896] Established in 2004 by the Old Dominion Resource Conservation & Development Council, the 41-stop driving tour commemorates Southside Virginia's educational heritage and important role in expanding the educational options available to minorities, namely women and African Americans. Anchored by the R.R. Moton Museum, the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail is managed by a southcentral Virginia tourism marketing consortium known as Virginia's Retreat.

could constitute a real service to the community. Committed to a comprehensive and multi-faceted dialogue, organizers assembled four days of activities, ranging from addresses by R.C. Smith, author of *They Closed Their Schools*, AFSC's Jean Fairfax, and gubernatorial hopeful Mark Warner to a performance by James Earl Jones as Rev. Vernon Johns. Children from both of the county's school systems contributed art projects for an exhibit entitled *Friendship through the Eyes of Children.*[897]

Some residents, black and white alike, deliberately avoided the events. Seventy-nine year old Robert Taylor told a *Washington Post* reporter that he saw no reason to attend, as he continued to believe that he and other members of the old power group had nothing for which to atone. Insisting that "closing the schools was no more about integration than the Civil War was about slavery" and that the primary responsibility for black students' plight lay with NAACP leaders' refusal to accept the Southside Schools offer, Taylor maintained that county leaders had no other option but to end public education. Passing the buck to the state of Virginia, he explained that, "We were picked as a test case. Nothing you could do. The federal government said we had to integrate and the state said we couldn't."[898]

A panel discussion entitled *Education in Prince Edward Today: Strength through Diversity* brought together a group of respected educators to discuss the transition from

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[897] "It's Past Time For Closure; It's Time to Begin to Heal," *The Record of Hampden-Sydney College*, Winter 2000: 2-8; Ken Woodley, "Healing, Not Cuts: Therapeutic, Not Harmful Outcome Sought By H-SC," *Farmville Herald*, 22 October 1999; Bulletin of Programs and Events, "Prince Edward Stories: Race, Schools, America," 25-29 October 1999, Hampden-Sydney College, 1965 Box, Prince Edward County Articles and Reports Post 1965 Folder, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

[898] Donald P. Baker, "Shame of a Nation: The Lessons and Legacy of the Prince Edward School Closings," *Washington Post Magazine*, 4 March 2001: 8-13, 21-26.

closed schools to improved educational opportunities, remaining problems in the schools, and the relationship between public and private education. Panelists included former public school superintendent James Anderson, current superintendent Margaret Blackmon, Fuqua School President Ruth Murphy, Rebecca Kelly, a white teacher who moved from the public schools to the Academy in 1959, and T. Burwell Robinson, the former Moton teacher whose firing played such a significant role in the 1969 strike. Dr. Robert Green, the Michigan State researcher whose 1964 study, *The Educational Status of Children in a District Without Public Schools*, remains the primary source on the educational and social consequences of the closings, returned to the county to headline a panel on *Education in the United States: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Though terming the county a "pretty good place to live," Green and his respondents directed the conversation toward the major issues confronting American education in the twenty-first century, namely vouchers, multiculturalism, social diversity and the role of schools in fostering a concern for human rights.[899]

Rev. Eric Griffin and his wife Renee moderated a panel entitled *Children's Stories: Being First, Being Left Out*. A wide variety of experiences informed the panel, comprised of Edwilda Isaac, Charlotte Womack (who told attendees that "I still cry about this sometimes"), and Hampden-Sydney alumnus Scott Harwood, whose parents sent him to the Academy with the explanation that the county was "standing up to the federal government and the Supreme Court." Other panelists included Sam Putney, grandson of

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[899] Bulletin of Programs and Events, "Prince Edward Stories: Race, Schools, America," 25-29 October 1999, Hampden-Sydney College, 1965 Box, Prince Edward County Articles and Reports Post 1965 Folder, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives; "It's Past Time For Closure; It's Time to Begin to Heal," *The Record of Hampden-Sydney College*, Winter 2000: 2-8.

white liberal Annie Putney, and Marcie Wall-Wolfe, who hypothesized that her deceased father, J. Barrye Wall, Jr., would now admit to being wrong and tell attendees, "I'm sorry I took your future away." The inclusion of Willie Shepperson as the final speaker met strenuous opposition from Hampden-Sydney alumnus Ray Moore, who warned that the militant Shepperson would disrupt the seminar with "ugly rhetoric" and cause a fistfight. The inevitable confrontation between Shepperson and Moore took a far different form than expected and became the symposium's most lasting image.[900]

Moore, the physician who so angered blacks and white moderates with his racist rhetoric and closed purse-strings during his long term on the School Board, constituted a enduring symbol of the old guard. As a panelist in a previous session, he praised the county for avoiding violence, according much of the credit to the Overton family, who dominated county law enforcement in the 1960's, complimented Griffin's "relatively calm and peaceful approach," and criticized the events of the period as a "radical surgical procedure and a hurry-up treatment that I think was a mistake." During his own panel, Shepperson surprised listeners by commenting that, "I could stand here and tell you a lot of real horror stories about what went on in Prince Edward...but that doesn't do any good. It doesn't matter what you did yesterday. It's what we're doing now and what we're going to do tomorrow [that matters]." He closed his remarks by issuing Ray Moore a startling invitation to meet him for breakfast the following morning.[901]

After their meal together, Shepperson returned to the platform to describe the emotions that seeing Moore the previous day had stirred up in him, as well as his

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[900] "It's Past Time For Closure; It's Time to Begin to Heal," *The Record of Hampden-Sydney College*, Winter 2000: 2-8.

[901] Ibid.

conviction that change would have to begin with himself. Describing their mutual decision to work together as brothers to break "the circle of hate and distrust," and Moore's willingness to prove his sincerity by making a donation to the Moton Museum, Shepperson descended into the audience as the elderly physician rose from his seat. Embracing, the two men walked hand in hand to the stage, at which time Moore vowed that Shepperson's conduct during the previous day's panel taught him how misplaced his warnings had been. "I was converted," he avowed. "I am a changed person." Many members of the audience burst into tears and Ken Woodley immortalized the moment in a two-inch banner headline in the following day's *Farmville Herald.*[902]

While many pointed to the moment as a deeply touching example of reconciliation and an encouraging indication of significant progress since 1959, Jean Fairfax labeled it "revolting." Frustrated with what she termed an attitude of "sweetness and light" pervading the symposium, she criticized organizers and speakers alike for downplaying the heartache, the incivility, the violence, and the lingering scars in order to champion the county as *Brown*'s success story. Particularly troubled by the potential ramifications of this narrative of "we had a crisis, it was terrible, this should never have happened, but all of that is past and there was no violence, and now we should be loving each other," Fairfax worried that the trappings of closure might serve as an obstacle to future attempts to objectively evaluate the county's racial politics. Interestingly, two years after the symposium, Shepperson himself acknowledged that his anger still burned. Gestures of reconciliation aside, "I still have that hate in me. It is here, and I will take it

[902] Ibid.

to my grave. Prince Edward never gave me any remorse. No one [including Moore] has ever said, 'I'm sorry for what we've done to you.'"[903]

Unnerving some organizers, Fairfax also prodded the college to turn the focus upon itself - to open up its administrative records and launch an oral history project targeting former trustees, faculty, staff and students – and examine the role Hampden-Sydney played in the crisis. Posing thorny questions about the treatment of dissenters in the college community, the college's willingness to pay Academy tuition for children of its white employees and blatant neglect of the sons and daughters of black staff members, and the relationship between Hampden-Sydney intellectuals and the philosophy of massive resistance, Fairfax reminded her listeners that "there can be no genuine peace without reconciliation and no reconciliation without confronting the truth of the past." Despite the astuteness of her criticisms, they challenged the college's ability to meet its goal of "facing this issue, maybe even putting it to rest," and never found a receptive audience.[904]

Fifty Years Marching: The Anniversary Celebrations

In 1997, the Martha E. Forrester Council of Women, though still actively engaged in the preservation effort, transferred legal control of the museum project to a newly created R. R. Moton Museum Board of Directors. Museum Board members included

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[903] Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 20; Jamie Ruff, "It is Not Gone; It is Still Deep," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 22 April 2001, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives.

[904] Ibid, p. 19-20; Text of Remarks by Jean Fairfax, "Prince Edward Stories: Race, Schools, America," 26 October 1999, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; "It's Past Time For Closure; It's Time to Begin to Heal," *The Record of Hampden-Sydney College*, Winter 2000: 2-8.

Vera Allen, Thomas Mayfield, Hampden-Sydney's Samuel V. Wilson. and his Longwood counterpart, Patricia Cormier. In January 2001, representatives of this body presented the Supervisors with the final payment on the building, and ownership of the old Moton High School transferred from the county to the Museum Board. Three months later, the Robert R. Moton Museum: A Center for the Study of Civil Rights in Education celebrated its grand opening with a gala fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the 1951 strike. Many local pastors framed their April 22nd sermons around the topic of racial justice and reconciliation. That evening, the Farmville Area Ministerial Association, which in the 1960's could not even bring itself to host an interracial meeting, sponsored a community worship service with Rev. Eric Griffin as presiding minister. The youngest son of his minister father, Eric Griffin earned a M.Div. from the Virginia Union University School of Theology before accepting the pastorate of St. Stephen United Church of Christ in Greensboro, North Carolina.[905]

The following day, April 23, 2001, nearly one thousand people crowded onto the small patch of lawn adjoining the school to witness the ribbon-cutting ceremony opening the museum and hear remarks from Vera Allen, Oliver Hill, who urged the crowd to "let Barbara Johns be your inspiration," county school superintendent Margaret Blackmon, and John Stokes, Vice President of the 1951 R.R. Moton High Student Council. Keynote speaker Juan Williams, host of National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation* and author of

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[905] Program, "Ceremonies Conferring National Historic Landmark Designation on the Robert Russa Moton High School," 31 August 1998, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Frank Shanaberger, "Moton Sale Completed," *Farmville Herald*, 12 January 2001, ibid; "Moton Events Are Set," *Farmville Herald*, 18 April 2001, ibid; Bulletin of Programs and Events, "Prince Edward Stories: Race, Schools, America," 25-29 October 1999, Hampden-Sydney College, 1965 Box, Prince Edward County Articles and Reports Post 1965 Folder, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives.

Eyes on the Prize, a companion volume to the respected civil rights documentary series, lauded the four hundred and fifty Moton High students as pioneers in social change – "the heroes of Prince Edward County." Though climbing temperatures induced many of the fifty-odd strike veterans in attendance to accept shuttle bus transportation downtown to the county courthouse for the final segment of the program, roughly a dozen set out on foot along their old march route. Hundreds of local residents followed: blacks, whites, museum supporters, public school and Fuqua schoolchildren, and Longwood and Hampden-Sydney students.[906]

Looking out over the crowd assembled on the courthouse lawn, Delaware talk show host John Watson - whose role in the strike included placing the phone call that lured Principal M. Boyd Jones out of the building - entreated attendees to let the memory of the strike spur them to hopeful action. "When you tell your children, leave out the hate," he implored. "Tell them about hope. Leave the anger out." John Stokes perhaps best captured the mood of the day when he reminded his classmates of a vow made fifty years earlier. "I promised that you would get a new school and that your name would be placed in history," he noted proudly. "I've kept my commitment."[907]

The commemoration surrounding the next major anniversary, fifty years of *Brown v. Board* in 2004, highlighted the theme of ordinary people taking action to challenge

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[906] Program, "Ceremonies Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Historic Student Strike at Robert Russa Moton High School and the Formal Opening of the Robert Russa Moton Museum: A Center for the Study of Civil Rights in Education," 23 April 2001, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Kathryn Orth, "A Walk To Remember," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 April 2001, ibid.

[907] Kathryn Orth, "A Walk To Remember," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 April 2001, ibid; Paul Nussbaum, "Area Residents Recall Their Role in Virginia Push for School Equality," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 May 2004.

injustice and stressed the human stories underlying the famous litigation campaign. In January of the anniversary year, the Virginia Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Commission posthumously awarded L.F. Griffin its annual award for "contributions in the spirit of Dr. King." Over seven hundred people attended the ceremony at the Library of Virginia. The day after accepting the award in his father's memory, Leslie Francis Griffin, Jr. told members of the national *Brown v. Board of Education* 50th Anniversary Commission that Griffin, Sr. had indeed been a great man, but "this was not a one man band." Griffin's insistence upon placing his father's leadership within the context of a community of individuals willing to act in the cause of social justice set the tone for the year's various activities.[908]

Many Commission members found themselves deeply affected by their visits to the county. Like Timothy Phelps, they noted a poignancy and a spirit of hope sadly lacking in most of the other *Brown* communities. Roger Gregory, the first African American to sit on the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, termed the old Moton High School "the most significant spot in terms of talking about *Brown* and its real impact on people...the power of what individuals determined to make a change and difference can do." The events organized for the official May anniversary weekend built upon this sense of emotional connection to the past, highlighting themes of sacrifice, courage, and accomplishment. Jean Fairfax, who attended each major event, rejoiced over the inclusive nature of the commemoration activities, which encompassed a diverse assortment of participants, sponsors and honorees, and exhibited a willingness to

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[908] Ken Woodley, "Rev. Griffin Is Honored," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Jean Fairfax to "Our Gang," 24 January 2004, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

acknowledge the true depth of the crisis that she had not seen at Hampden-Sydney five years earlier.[909]

The Prince Edward County NAACP, the Moton Museum, AFSC, First Baptist Church, and Prince Edward County High School all sponsored special events, ranging from a "Reflections and Reminiscences" session to a scholars panel to a ceremony honoring the *Davis* plaintiffs, in which local schoolchildren read the participants' names aloud and presented roses to those present. At the museum, Governor Mark Warner celebrated the formal unveiling of the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail with honest words about the state's past and a hopeful vision for a more equitable future. AFSC arranged a gathering for all those who left the county to pursue their education: placement program participants, Kittrell students, those sponsored by the Virginia Teachers' Association, and those whose families handled arrangements themselves.[910]

After two hours of open discussion, Fairfax admiringly noted the group's resilience, good humor, and "ability to accept challenges in new situations." While some shared amusing anecdotes from their placement experiences, others spoke of more serious issues: lingering bitterness, perceptions of faint hostility from family members and peers who remained in the county throughout the closings, and the trauma inherent in breaking up a family. Several discussed difficult relationships with the relatives who took them in, and the awkwardness of speaking about the lost years even to members of one's own family whose closings' experiences differed from their own. Though many

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[909] Rob Chapman, "Standing Tall, Walking Out," *Farmville Herald*, 21 January 2004, clipping, School Closings Clippings File, LU Archives; Jean Fairfax to "Our Gang," 28 May 2004, Jean Fairfax Personal Files; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 20.

[910] Jean Fairfax to "Our Gang," 28 May 2004, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

now resided outside the county, the majority still intimately identified themselves with Prince Edward, one so much so that he continued to vote in the county by absentee ballot. Several spoke eloquently of having a grounded "sense of place" in Prince Edward and spoke of plans to return someday to build on family land and bring the lessons of a life in a broader world back to the county. Several who recently returned to Prince Edward after decades elsewhere concurred that returning home had constituted an important part of their life journeys.[911]

Apologizing for the Past

In February 2003, the Virginia General Assembly, in its own attempt to deal with the past, issued a joint resolution expressing its "profound regret" for the closings. The resolution acknowledged that:

> The closing of the Prince Edward County schools severely affected the education of African-American students, wounding the human spirit and ultimately contributing to job and home losses, family displacements and separations, and a deep sense of despair within the African American community.

It went on to urge residents of the state to familiarize themselves with the history of massive resistance and embrace the upcoming fiftieth anniversary commemorations of *Brown* as an opportunity to learn from the past and ensure that Virginians would "reject absolutely any such discriminatory practices in the future."[912]

The Prince Edward County School District followed up this near-apology with a special graduation ceremony in Spring 2003 honoring approximately four hundred former

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[911] Ibid; Jean Fairfax interview, 7-8 January 2005, transcript, p. 20; Brinson, "The AFSC and School Desegregation."

[912] House Joint Resolution No. 613, Virginia General Assembly, February 2003, available at Hhttp://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2003/inf105a.pdfH.

students denied the opportunity to complete their education with honorary high school diplomas. The ceremony's success induced school officials to repeat it again in 2004, at which time two hundred additional members of the "lost generation" seized the opportunity to participate. One observer noted that despite their gray hair and canes, the graduates beamed as they explained to reporters how much the chance to walk across that stage meant to them. Many shared their plans for further education. Others, however, deemed honorary diplomas a poor substitute for the lives a high school education might have accorded them. Despite his teenage daughter's encouragement to participate, Clem Venable, a Hampden-Sydney groundskeeper who struggled along in the reopened schools for several years before dropping out, kept a distance from the ceremonies. "I don't need them to give me a piece of paper now," he explained. "What I needed they can't give me back." Venable's comment echoed the reflections of others who called for a more future-oriented remedy to the situation, such as a reparations program.[913]

The *Farmville Herald*'s Ken Woodley observed the lead-up to the 2003 resolution of regret with great interest. Recognizing that while saying, "I'm sorry" is a good thing, saying "I'm going to do something about it," is much better, he began to campaign for a restitution program. Both in person – in the halls of the legislature – and in the pages of many Virginia newspapers, he lobbied the General Assembly to create a Scholars Fund financed by the five years' worth of public school appropriations the state never made to Prince Edward County. Pointing out that the educational deprivation suffered by the

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[913] Brinson, "The AFSC and School Desegregation;" "Black Students Denied Classes From 1959-64 Get Diplomas," *JET Magazine*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (30 June 2003): 17; Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Fredreka Schouten, "Town That Resisted in '59 Tries to Right a Wrong," *USA Today*, 27 April 2004; Jean Fairfax to "Our Gang," 28 May 2004, Jean Fairfax Personal Files.

closings generation exerted generational consequences, he advocated a program open not only to those directly affected, but to their children and grandchildren as well, as well as to any whites who did not enroll at the Academy.[914]

Quoting a member of the presidentially appointed *Brown v. Board of Education* Fiftieth Anniversary Commission's characterization of the proposal as "a G.I. Bill for the foot soldiers of the civil rights movement," Woodley urged the state not to "use a sluggish economy as an excuse for not repairing the harm done during the massive resistance campaign in Prince Edward." Woodley's calculations estimated five years' worth of school appropriations, after adjusted for inflation, as roughly $11.75 million, more than enough to create a fund that could truly change lives. The General Assembly balked at earmarking such a massive sum for educational restitution, but embraced the principle underlying the program. Recognizing that the educational disruption of massive resistance extended beyond Prince Edward County, Virginia legislators expanded Woodley's concept to include all individuals "enrolled or scheduled to begin their education in the public schools of Virginia during Massive Resistance between 1954 and 1964, in jurisdictions in which the public schools were closed to avoid desegregation," i.e. Prince Edward County, Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk.[915]

In April 2004, the General Assembly passed a bill creating the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Program and Fund, appropriating $50,000 for the first round of

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[914] Paul Nussbaum and Annette John-Hall, "Fight for School Equality Still Leaves Scars for Many," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 May 2004; Ken Woodley, "Owed An Education," *Washington Post*, 18 May 2003.

[915] Woodley, "Owed An Education," ibid; *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Awards Program Committee and Fund Fact Sheet, 10 August 2006, (30-231.01 et seq., Code of Virginia).

scholarships. Though available only to those personally denied an education and still residing in Virginia, the renewable scholarships covered tuition and textbook fees for GED programs, adult high school diploma programs, career and technical education programs, and two and four year undergraduate degree programs at accredited Virginia institutions, both public and private. Five busloads of former Prince Edward students squeezed into Governor Mark Warner's office to witness the signing ceremony. Aware that contemporary actions could never erase the suffering of the past, Woodley acknowledged that, "There's no way we can go back in time. We can't rewrite history. But we can make the kind of history we should have now."[916]

During the period between the legislature's Regular and Reconvened Sessions, Virginia philanthropist and media investor John Kluge announced that he would donate $1 million to the fund if the state would provide a matching amount. Governor Warner rose to the occasion, and the Committee began its work with $1,050,000 in state funds. As of October 2006, Kluge's contribution remained outstanding, but with the funds in the treasury, the *Brown* Scholarship Awards Committee awarded eighty scholarships in 2005-06, the program's first year of operation. Thirty-six of these recipients followed through and enrolled in a degree program. The Committee, comprised of two senators, four Delegates, and five private citizens, including Prince Edward native and placement

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[916] *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Awards Program Committee and Fund Fact Sheet, 10 August 2006, (30-231.01 et seq., Code of Virginia); Paul Nussbaum and Annette John-Hall, "Fight for School Equality Still Leaves Scars for Many," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12 May 2004.

program veteran Phyllistine Ward Mosley, approved fifty-three applications for the 2006-07 academic year.[917]

A revision to the legislation underlying the program allowed residents, beginning in the 2006 tax filing year, to designate a portion or the entirety of their state tax refund as a contribution to the fund, inviting a new generation of Virginians to take personal responsibility for righting the wrongs of the past. While generally supportive of the program, some Prince Edward blacks doubted the sincerity of the state's contrition. Others, however, such as Rita Moseley, a secretary at Prince Edward County High School who used her scholarship to enroll in a business management program, reflected that, "I'm the kind of person who thinks it's never too late. To do it now is better than not having done anything at all."[918]

In January 2007, both houses of the General Assembly (House and Senate) took up identical resolutions apologizing for events further in the past: the Commonwealth's complicity in the enslavement of African Americans. Suggesting that public contrition could ease "the perpetual pain, distrust, and bitterness of many African American" Virginians, sponsors argued that an apology for slavery and call for racial reconciliation would constitute an appropriate and sensitive commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement. Controversy exploded immediately when Hanover County Republican Delegate Frank Hargrove told the *Charlottesville Daily Progress* that

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[917] *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Awards Program Committee and Fund Fact Sheet, 10 August 2006, (30-231.01 et seq., Code of Virginia); Personal email to author from Brenda Edwards, Senior Research Associate, Division of Legislative Services, Virginia General Assembly, 27 October 2006.

[918] Edwards email, ibid; Rita Moseley, qtd. in Michael Janofsky, "A New Hope for Dreams Suspended by Segregation," *New York Times*, 31 July 2005.

contemporary Virginians bear no responsibility for slavery and "our black citizens should get over it."[919]

In response, *Washington Post* columnist Colbert I. King, an African American, agreed that contemporary lawmakers are far removed from antebellum slavery, but pointed out that Virginia's shameful record on race extends far past 1865. As King wrote:

> Hargrove, who will be eighty next week, cannot escape the fact that he and many white Virginians alive today were present when the spirit of Jim Crow reigned supreme in the Old Dominion...When Hargrove was twenty-nine, Sen. Harry Byrd declared massive resistance to the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision desegregating public schools. Did he miss that? What did thirty-one year old Hargrove think in 1958 when the General Assembly passed a series of laws to prevent school desegregation, including a measure forbidding state funds to be spent on integrated schools? That was a memorable year. And the next year, Prince Edward County went to an extreme to protect lily-white education. It closed the school system rather than integrate.

Instead of apologizing for slavery, King proposed, the General Assembly might better use its powers of contrition to repent of more recent offenses against African Americans, namely segregation, discrimination and massive resistance: sins actively supported or passively accepted by many surviving twenty-first century Virginians.[920]

In late February, lawmakers struck a compromise, downgrading "apology" to "contrition," and finally to, echoing the language of the statement on massive resistance, "profound regret" for "the involuntary servitude of Africans and the exploitation of Native Americans." The resolution passed both houses of the General Assembly without a dissenting vote, making Virginia the first state in the nation to issue an official

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[919] Michael Sluss, "Slavery Apology Legislation Ignites First Spark," *The Roanoke Times*, 17 January 2007.

[920] Colbert I. King, "In Virginia, More to 'Get Over' Than Slavery," *Washington Post*, 20 January 2007.

statement on its slaveholding past. Though focused primarily on colonial and antebellum abuses, the resolution briefly touched upon disfranchisement, segregation, and the forced relocation of Native American children to the federally-sponsored Indian schools. While admitting a general predilection toward celebratory history, House Majority Leader H. Morgan Griffith, a Salem Republican, acknowledged that "if you're going to celebrate the things you see as noble and good in your history, you should also acknowledge the things in your history that are not so good."[921]

The changes in orientation and wording between the original proposal for an apology and the final resolution of regret proved significant enough to appease even Frank Hargrove. After sparking controversy with his "get over it" remarks, Hargrove, perhaps in an attempt to bolster his image with black constituents, co-sponsored a House resolution calling upon the state to establish the third Saturday of June as an annual "Juneteenth" Freedom Day.[922] At the same time, however, he maintained his opposition to the concept of an apology, explaining his support for the resolution of regret as an acknowledgement of the evils of slavery. "I didn't feel like that was a conflict of my refusal to apologize," he noted. "We all should take great pleasure as Americans that we no longer have slavery in this country." Civil rights lawyer and Richmond Democrat

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[921] Olympia Meola and Pamela Stallsmith, "Assembly Expresses 'Regret' for Slavery, Passes Roads Bill," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 February 2007.

[922] The oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery, Juneteenth has its roots in the June 19, 1865 arrival of Union troops under Major General Gordon Granger in Galveston, Texas, bringing news of the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War to the comparatively isolated region. After declining in popularity in the early part of the twentieth century, Juneteenth celebrations enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in the 1980's and 1990's. For more on Juneteenth, see William H. Wiggins, Jr., *O Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).

Henry Marsh III, the Senate sponsor of the measure, ultimately accepted its downgrading as a political necessity, terming it "a compromise that preserves the integrity of the resolution." Marsh, who began his Senate term in 1991 after many years as a partner at Virginia's most famous civil rights law firm, Hill, Tucker, & Marsh, and a term as Richmond's first black mayor, spent a lifetime pushing the boundaries of the "possible" in Virginia politics. His judgment on issues of politics and race is generally astute. Ultimately, however, the measure of the sincerity of the resolution will lie in state residents' willingness to confront not only the realities, but also the legacies of slavery, and the particularly Virginian political tradition that so effectively disfranchised, silenced, and marginalized African Americans for generations after jubilee.[923]

The Meaning of It All

In their 1992 interviews for a never-completed documentary, filmmakers Laurie and Ken Hoen asked those impacted by the closings whether they considered themselves victors in the overthrow of Jim Crow education or victims of a massive conspiracy to preserve racial inequality. They received diverse responses, even from members of the same family. Elderly businessman Reginald White, Sr. derived a deep sense of pride from his family's long involvement with the crisis. Noting that if Prince Edward blacks had not challenged the Supervisors' course of action, school closings could have become endemic across the South, he termed the crisis a victory and hypothesized that his children felt similarly. White's daughter, Vonita, however, saw the situation in a different light. "I think I was a victim," she acknowledged thoughtfully:

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[923] Olympia Meola and Pamela Stallsmith, "Assembly Expresses 'Regret' for Slavery, Passes Roads Bill," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 25 February 2007.

> I think history will probably prove that we truly were a lost generation, and that many of our children are still lost, and many of their children will still be lost...I think we were victims and I'm wondering now, why? For what? What purpose did it serve?

Fondly recalling the sense of community and racial pride nurtured in the county's black schools, she characterized school integration as a net loss for the black community, resulting in tracking, behavior problems, lower achievement levels, and a breakdown in the relationship between teachers and students.[924]

John Hurt also termed himself a victim, first denied the right to go to school and then in 1964 placed in a sloppily-grouped classroom that made him feel even further behind. Chuck Reid concurred. "I see myself as a victim of lost education," he stated flatly. Edward Morton feared that the entire struggle achieved no lasting gains. "Who won? Nobody. We didn't win because we didn't get to go to school. They didn't win because they didn't get what they wanted...I just feel that integration would have come without the push." Looking back on the consequences of the road taken, Morton opined that the black community should not have forced the issue by turning to the courts, but rather pursued integration through a campaign of "friendly persuasion," and if unsuccessful, maintained the 1959 status quo.[925]

James White, on the other hand, considered himself a victor. Pointing to the substantial integration and improved quality of education in the schools and the presence

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[924] Transcript, Reginald White interview, 10 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Vonita White Dandridge [Foster] interview, 29 September 1992, ibid; Foster and Foster, p. 15-23.

[925] Transcript, John Hurt interview, 31 August 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Transcript, Armstead "Chuck" Reid interview, 19 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, ibid.

of African Americans on the School Board as indications of victory, he concluded that, "I gotta say, I was on the winning team." Gary Smith agreed. Even as a politically active teenager, his anger toward the situation in the county balanced itself out with a strong conviction of victory and a sense of moving forward. Charles Herndon noted thoughtfully:

> I've learned through the experience...it showed me that people are the same. There's prejudice on both sides. There is. And I think I'm a victor because I understand that...the victims are the ones that give up. The ones that have gone through that 60's era and feel like, "there's no use, I can't win." Those are the ones that's into drugs now, alcoholism...They are the victims. Just given up. But I don't believe that. It's harder for us, but it's not impossible. So, with that notion in mind, I just keep on striving to get what I want out of life, no matter what. Nobody, nobody's gonna stop me."[926]

The attitude that "nobody's gonna stop me" has been a hallmark of the Prince Edward struggle. From Barbara Johns and the strikers of 1951, to the parents who scorned Southside Schools, to the courageous children who set out into the unknown rather than allow white bigotry to limit their minds and their lives, those who made history in Prince Edward refused to believe that they were too young, too powerless, too uneducated, or too fearful to effect change. From the demonstrators who picketed and sang their way to jail in 1963, to the hundreds of young people who walked miles a day to attend the summer crash programs, to the white dissenters who jeopardized their economic security and social position to find solidarity with their black neighbors, they persevered in the fight. From the brilliant Baptist minister who gave up his dream of getting out of Farmville to be a Moses to his people to the activists and parents who turned Citizens for Public Education into the county's first interracial progressive

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[926] Transcript, James White interview, 19 August 1992, ibid; Transcript, Gary Smith interview, 24 September 1992, ibid; Transcript, Charles Herndon interview, 20 August 1992, ibid.

community organization, they maintained that they struggled not for themselves alone, but for their country, and for their children's children.

From the teenage staff members of *The VOICE*, who faithfully persevered in writing, publishing, and distributing a newspaper that could serve the community denied access to the *Farmville Herald* to the 1969 strikers and their supporters, they refused to accept the inevitability of the status quo. From the leaders who ran for local office in order to break the stranglehold of white power and its devastating consequences to the preservationists who battled to preserve the old R.R. Moton High School and the history that accompanied it, they looked to the future without forgetting the past.

And their efforts have not proven in vain. In bringing suit against those responsible for the decision to close the schools, they forced the Supreme Court, in *Griffin*, to explicitly proclaim the right to a taxpayer-funded education a constitutional one, thus helping to block a potentially massive shift toward private education and preserving the egalitarian ideal of education for all. In producing two generations of teenagers willing to walk out of school to demand both a better education and increased respect for blacks as human beings, Prince Edward blacks transformed their community from one considered in the late 1940's "a slice of antebellum Virginia" to a hotbed of civil rights protest. Ultimately, they made a place that, while still divided by lines of race and class, does boast one of the most integrated public school systems in the nation. In refusing to allow the desire to forget the past, "clean up" history, and project an image of civility and harmony to prevent wrenching and emotional public discussion of the scars remaining, new generations of Prince Edwarders have taken significant strides toward

overcoming Virginia's tendency to manage conflict and ugliness by shoving it under the rug.

Nevertheless, the mid-century events in Prince Edward County provide some of the ugliest manifestations of racial bigotry, abuse of power, and class prejudice in recent American history. With a stroke of the pen, the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors abolished a right long-cherished as fundamental to American democracy because it hindered the interests of an established oligarchy. For five years, thousands of children suffered as obstructionists manipulated the judicial system to serve their own interests. The little-known story of the county's educational tragedy challenges the triumphalist narrative of American democracy, for it demonstrates the ease with which rights can be denied, the pattern of hiding bigotry and opportunism behind the respectable rhetoric of constitutionalism, and the disconnect between plaintiff suffering and the impersonal delays of the judicial system. In 1963, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights justified a proposed study of the county on the grounds that the events in Prince Edward offered important lessons for the future. Fifty years later, in the midst of a mounting retreat from *Brown* and an intensifying national debate over the future of public education, these lessons are more important than ever. As revealed in the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, education is still not recognized as a fundamental constitutional right, leaving its status precarious in the face of new threats.[927]

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[927] United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Draft Proposal for a Study in Prince Edward County," February 1963, 1963 Box, Folder 38549, PEC Collection, AFSC Archives. For more on *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* [411 U.S. 1 (1973)] see Kermit L. Hall, editor, *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 753-754. Many thanks to

Whether or not Prince Edward's white oligarchy deliberately seized on the *Brown* decision as an excuse to pursue a long-cherished goal of ending education for the masses by privatizing the school system and slowly raising fees until poorer members of the community found themselves excluded, its actions created just such a situation. In the early years, leaders pointed toward government-issued tuition grants and tax exemptions, scholarship fund campaigns, changes to the local tax structure, and fund-raising drives as guarantees that schools need not be public in order to be accessible, free, or low cost. Stressing private schools' ability to accord parents an opportunity to protect their children from the "brainwashing" supposedly running rampant in the public system and provide them more control over their offspring's social contacts, environment, and curriculum, they convinced many parents that public schools would handicap their children. Yet when the tuition grants and tax exemptions collapsed and the scholarship fund drives failed to raise the amount needed to keep all students enrolled, the private school champions turned a deaf ear to the pleas of less well-off parents, callously allowing hundreds of working class children to fall through the cracks. After all, they possessed no legal obligation to provide for every child in the county. Education shifted from a fundamental right to a privilege for those whites who could pay.

In an era of increasing privatization of education, flush with similar rhetoric of choice, parental control, vouchers, "failing schools," and federal support for private academies, the trajectory of events in Prince Edward County offers a cautionary reminder that no substitute for a publicly funded, publicly operated school system has ever proven

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Dr. Edward H. Peeples, Jr., who cogently explored the lessons of Prince Edward in "Public Schools On the Run: Then and Now," 2 March 2004, unpublished paper, Author's Personal Files. My debt to his interpretation is obvious.

itself able to provide consistent quality education for all children. Privately arranged alternatives such as summer crash programs, placement programs, Free Schools, and training centers lacked the longevity, funds, sustainability, and community connection necessary to prevent the unparalleled educational devastation suffered by members of the county's lost generation. Even a full-fledged private school established with near-unanimous community support, built on community institutions and constructed primarily with volunteer labor, proved within five years to be inadequate to the task set before it. Hundreds of white children joined their black counterparts in the tobacco fields, in low-paying service jobs, and in front of the television because the safeguards guaranteed to keep private education accessible crumbled. A change in the political wind, a court decision, a recession, a change in administration, an unsuccessful fund drive, a readjustment of the tax structure, or an outbreak of community apathy, and the protections collapsed.

The Prince Edward tragedy powerfully demonstrates the fact that the scars and handicaps created by educational deprivation do not end with those directly affected. They are handed down to children and grandchildren. More eloquently than any words, they demonstrate the cost of abandoning public education and compromising its central role in the preservation of American democracy. As Edward Morton once said, "The dog years will never go away. It's like when you take somebody and brand them. You can hide the scar, but the scar will still be there." Rita Moseley phrased her assessment differently but conveyed the same idea. "You have to live for the rest of your life," she

noted sadly, "wondering who you could have been or what you could have done with your life."[928]

[928] Transcript, Edward Morton interview, 25 September 1992, "Not Our Children" Oral History Collection, VHS; Fredreka Schouten, "Town That Resisted in '59 Tries to Right a Wrong," *USA Today*, 27 April 2004.

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